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OPEN TRAILS

By the Same Author

JANEY CANUCK IN THE WEST

CASSELL & COMPANY, LTD.
La Belle Sauvage, London, E.C.

"The land is clothing herself with verdure as a bride adorning for her husband."

KANT

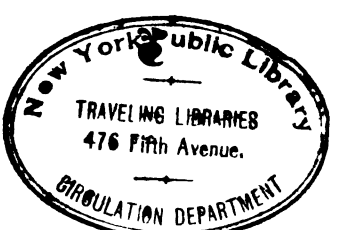
1928.25

OPEN TRAILS

BY

"JANEY CANUCK"
(EMILY FERGUSON)
Author of "Janey Canuck in the West"

WITH FRONTISPIECE BY
E. W. HASLEHUST, R.B.A.
AND NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS IN THE TEXT BY
WARWICK REYNOLDS



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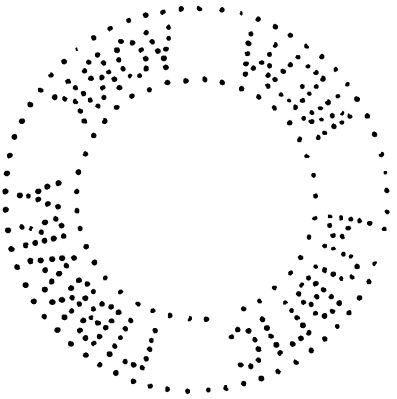

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You long for a bookseller's stall my book, and will not stay modestly, as I bred you, at home. Be off, then; but remember there is no return. "What have I done?" you will say, when found fault with or laid aside. You will be liked at Rome as long as the novelty lasts. When the vulgar take you up, you will feed the bookworms or be sent to the provinces. I shall laugh as the man who, when his donkey persisted in going too near the edge of a precipice, gave him a push and helped him fall. . . . When you get an audience tell people who I was, what I became, how I looked, and how old I am to-day.

—HORACE. *Epistle XX.* (*Book I.*).

(*Translated by* Professor WILLIAM GREENWOOD, M.A., Ph.D.)

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OPEN TRAILS

I

Sing Ho! for Robins

Heard I a whisper,
Or was it a wing?
Who was the lisper
That hinted of spring?

—BLANDEN

I MAKE up my mind to be pleasant to the Padre all the way to Wabamun Lake. It is two days' journey hence, and this, it may be seen, is no inconsequential resolution.

Like all the sons of Adam, the Padre has his ways. He will not talk when I want to. He loiters on smooth ground and drives furiously where it is rough. He has a polite way of hinting that I take all the rug and three-quarters of the seat. I may mention, in this connection, that his politeness is so unassailable that, in comparison with it, other people's fury would only be as balm of Gilead. Nevertheless, as I saunter out to the stables, I settle it in my mind that I will be placid all the way. Nothing, absolutely nothing, shall upset my equanimity on this trip.

Open Trails

"This person has . . . ruthlessly clipped Rhodney's mane."

The trouble with my resolutions is that they are always made for the future, and so never amount to anything. As an actuality, when I see the horses I gasp, and say several things that even the most liberal interpretation would place outside the scope of my resolution.

It is like this: we are driving Peter, the Padre's horse, and Rhodney, who is mine. The Padre holds it as a kind of fortieth article that Peter's mane shall be clipped, whereas I insist on Rhodney's being pulled. I greatly pride myself on his mane. When I ride past horses whose manes are only clipped it gives me a decided sense of superiority. Clipped manes! the very idea!

And, here, on this bright May morning, this person has gone and ruthlessly clipped Rhodney's mane almost to the crest, making it stand up like the bristles of a scrubbing brush. I could eat him on the spot. Chagrin is a poor word for my state of mind, but it will do as well as any other. I know he is annoyed about my calling him "Meddlesome Mattie" and "Ogre," for he throws the lines at me instead of tendering them. He throws them in the style of the high villain in the play, for, without suspecting it, the Padre has a strong theatrical instinct.

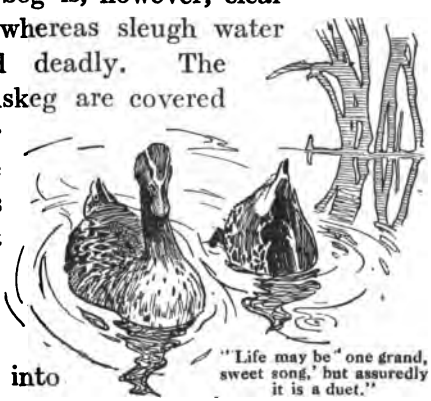
We do not speak for quite a mile till, with a

propitiatory voice and a humility befitting the occasion, he confesses:

"I did make a mess of it, old girl, but I happened to have the shears in my hand, and it came so awfully easy."

This is how we came to amend our quarrel, and why I produced the chocolates at one mile instead of five. Oh well! everything considered, wayward men have their use. They are a discipline to their wives; besides, we two understand each other well enough to differ on nearly everything. Differing with the Padre is like playing cricket. I set up things for him to knock down, and we both think it good sport.

The land about Edmonton is uncultivated, being held by speculators for a rise in values. On this Stoney Plain road, about four miles out, we encounter a tamarack muskeg — a vast, sopping bog that seems lost to God and man. The water of a bog is, however, clear and wholesome, whereas sleugh water is brackish and deadly. The trees in this muskeg are covered with a hanging moss that is like the white beards of old men. It is probable the bog will be [redacted]ed some day and made into



"Life may be one grand, sweet song,' but assuredly it is a duet."

Open Trails

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infallible settlers say this is the latest season they have known. All seed-life seems somnolent, but there is a delicate suggestion of colour at the tips of the willows. An insidious, slow-moving process is at work in the trees—one that spells from death unto life. It is the wine of spring aflush on the face of Nature. The delay only whets our appetite. There is, too, a unique beauty about this pre-vernal landscape in these days before it is screened in colour—a boldness suggestive of the Italian *primitifs*. With a minimum of means we get a maximum of expression. On a sunny slope, or near a stream, the grass shows a faint greenness. Still, there is a hitch in the curtain's rise, and the mystery-play of spring is not yet.

It is no wonder the Northern heart is a ranger, and hies to the southland of its fathers. Often and often, with an insatiable longing, it shuts its eyes and tries to conjure up the odour of white clover and apple-blossoms. Oh, God of wanderers! I trow there was never a perfume like white clover?

When we read of devastating storms and of bitter cold in the southern provinces, we wag our heads, wink our eyes, assume a surprisingly patronising air, and say, "There! There!" We even wax merry in printed paragraphs, for it soothes our *amour propre* to know these annoyances are no monopoly of our latitudes. But at blossom-time, the Northern heart, topful though it be with the fervour of living, longs for home with a mighty longing. 'Tis a sweet enchantment,

half-pleasure and half pain, like the haunting of an old tune.

Yet the exiled heart may not even breathe this. To do so were rankest treachery. It would be the acknowledgment of unwashed, original sin—indeed, of all the seven deadly sins. And, truth to tell, it is very good to be here this May day in the morning. It is good to respond to the sky, the sunshine, and the sensuousness of the soft, warm breeze. It is pleasant to make believe we have wandered into some happy by-path of a golden age, and that the old gods rule in these plotless woods—those kindly deities who rouge the rose, whistle up the birds, train the players, dye the leaves, sprinkle the ground with dew-drops, and untie the streamers of the trees. I have it now! It was—

> *"In the boyhood of the year*
> *Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere*
> *Rode through the coverts of the deer."*

On almost every pond and sleugh we see mallards and teal, and always they are in pairs. Life may be "one grand, sweet song," but, assuredly, it is a duet. We hear a woodpecker at mischief. He is the bad boy of the woods who taps at doors and runs away. We see some other birds which I am told are "a wisp of snipe." The snipe is not pretty. If a flea were enormously magnified he would almost pass for one.

There are other signs of spring on the wayside.

Sing Ho! for Robins

Nearly every cow is admiring a wobbly-legged little blatherskite of rusty-red fur, and each mare who has grown too old to work is kept busy explaining to her youthful son or daughter the true inwardness of wire fences. Even the pussy-willow has pushed off her waterproof sheath and has borne a flower which my esquire calls a "pistillate blossom." This is a well-sounding name for what is really only a catkin — that is to say, a little cat.

Most of the houses we see are inhabited by bachelors. A traveller does not need genius to know this. Where the one Incomparable She holds sway there is a clothes-line in the yard and a curtain at the window.

A bachelor shack costs one dollar and twenty-five cents or, at best, two dollars. Everything that goes into the structure is taken off his holding with the exception of two panes of glass and a few nails—a very few. Poor bachelor! he cannot cut his own hair, and has never a soul to listen to his talk. But there is no need to worry

"Most of the houses we see are inhabited by bachelors."

about him; he is sure to marry. Birds always come when you set up an empty house in a garden.

The first settlement we come to is Spruce Grove. Here our road runs between the Canadian Northern Railway and the Grand Trunk Pacific grade. The settlement consists of a flag-station, an hotel, and eight unoccupied shacks of one room each. It was, I am told, necessary that a certain number of householders should make petition for the hotel to be licensed, so these shacks were erected and peopled by "householders." Oh! we are a resourceful people in Alberta; also, we get very thirsty.

Farther on we come to another small settlement, where we stop to water the horses and ask a loafer the name of the last place. He promptly answers, "Peasoup." He is a mangy-looking fellow, whose every aspect is a challenge to combat. The ostler tells us that its real name is Spruce Grove—New Spruce Grove—and this place is Old Spruce Grove. The new village is inhabited by French folk; the old one by Germans. They exchange pleasantries—which doubtless have their origin in jealousy—by calling each other's villages "Peasoup" and "Sauerkraut."

All the way along my fellow-farer is silent as a tree. He has an exasperating way of leaving his body lying around without a mind attached, and I am sorely afraid, one of these dark days, they will miss connection. This is why I fear to

disturb him while his wits are wool-gathering. If I offer him the usual penny for his thoughts, he says, "I was not thinking of anything; a pastime," he further comments, "very popular in this country." I have not the temerity to speak after this pitiless dagger-thrust, so sing a song which begins:

"Afar in the desert I love to ride,
With the silent bushboy alone by my side."

To stop my singing, he remarks, "That is a beautiful field yonder," which only convinces me his mind is still detached, for the field is raw and ugly; it looks like a huge, dirty tent that the wind has torn and thrown to the earth. To prevent his lapsing into silence, I draw his attention to the alkali showing in the ditch. Nothing so ruffles a Northerner—and this fine fellow is one to his last atom—as to speak of alkali. It is a case where he literally declares white to be black. But, Lord of the world! this is true of all people. If I, waxing bold, send an article to an Ontario, or even to a United States, magazine, and mention the fact of noticing alkali in the soil, the editor—profligate fellow—promptly blue-pencils it. I do not know the reason unless he, also, has real estate to sell in the North-West. But I do see it sometimes! My word of honour I do!

My conversational throw is successful. The Padre rises to my fly and tells me I am the victim of a brain-sick delusion, and that I have the heart

of a renegade rebel. He cannot see a grain of alkali, but a little farther on, when I show him a whole ditch of it, he tacks with the wind, like all Northerners, and discourses on the supreme advantages of alkali in the soil. Think of that! Now, if the Padre were a carnal man and not spiritually minded, I would have doubts as to his sincerity. The word alkali, he informs me, is of Arabic origin, *kali* being the name of a plant from the ashes of which an alkaline substance was first procured. I do not know if his statement is correct, or that potash is one of the component parts of alkali and, consequently, an essential to plant growth, but only that he said so. He talked about nitrogen, sodium, calcium, silicon, and phosphorus, with a very learned air, all of which tended to the deduction that land without alkali was no good—positively no good—and that without a plenitude of alkali we would find it quite impossible to grow No. 1 Hard wheat.

It is thus with every vagary of the climate or soil. If the crop of a North-Westerner be hailed out, he considers it a windfall both literally and metaphorically. It gives him an advantage over the insurance company, and he is free from harvest expenses. It is, in more senses than one, a smashing business event. If it should ever chance to rain pitchforks, I have no doubt every mother's son would smile all the way round his head and say, "How lucky! Just what we need for haying!" His outlook is pronouncedly Tapleian. His is an

optimism that refuses to be disciplined. He always wins his game, for he plays without an opponent.

"Janey."

There is one other matter you must never hint at in your magazine articles, and that is the cold. If any breathing woman should ever be so audacious, the Board of Trade officers will grind her to dust; yet I will say that, now and then, the temperature rather inclines that way, and frost-bites are almost as common as mosquito bites. One marvellously cold day this January, as I stepped off the street-car, I encountered John, a teamster, who used to work for the Padre.

"Man John, your nose is frozen!" I said.

"D—— it, missus; so are my ears."

John is a properer man than most, but he will never remember to say "By Ginger," as I told him.

Arrived at the pavement, I said to a dapper youth:

"Excuse me, but your face is frozen quite badly."

"No, it's not!" he snarled, and rushed on.

He was a real-estate broker. The next two men were ruddy-faced, but it may be said in explanation that they were emerging from a saloon.

With a third man I again took up my theme:

"Excuse me, sir; but your nose is——"

"Pardon me, madam; so is yours."*

There is almost no ploughing done along this road. The farmers have been freighting supplies for the contractors at work on the railway grade, and have neglected their fields. This means that a killing, ribald frost, which is due to arrive immediately after the first full moon in August, will convert the oats into "No. 6 feed, tough." All day we have seen only one man ploughing, and we stop to watch him, but particularly to see the slither of the ploughshares in the sod.

From headland to headland, up and down the furrows, swarms of birds follow the horses. As yet no one has painted this rough-clad, hard-shod farmer of Northern Canada, this sun-browned master of the plough, surrounded by his feathered friends. It would be a goodly picture, one that might seem almost allegorical. Watch the horses lean into their collars with generous persistence! Good horses they are, good and true, with sinew, bone, and class.

Hereabout, we pass an Indian Reserve. It is officially known as the Tommy-La-Potac. Some day it will be sold for the benefit of the Indians —also for that of the whites.

The only wild life we see is an occasional squirrel, or a gopher, and the frogs piping in

* Now, I am in for it! Advice, sympathy, and subscriptions wherewith to pay my legal expenses, may be forwarded in care of my publishers.

the ponds — if such bulgy, plethoric things may be termed "wild." I am much of the opinion it is stupid and senseless pride on the part of the bull frog to make all this ado over the gelatinous floats of eggs his lady is launching in the water. He is a hateful batrachian, and nothing will ever turn him from the evil tenor of his song, for, like the rooster, the turkey-gobbler and grimalkin, the frog belongs to the shrieking brotherhood.

The squirrel, with much chirruping, chases its tail in an apparently endless merry-go-round. To judge a man's character, look at his face or his shoulders; to judge a squirrel's, it is just as well to cast a look at its tail. This stands for perkiness, good-humour, quick-changing moods, late hours, unquenchable curiosity, and high jinks generally.

At Stoney Plain we went to the Royal Hotel. Last month, in this bar-room, there happened a terrible fight that cost one man his life and another his liberty. As a consequence, the landlord has had his licence cancelled. The frequenters of the bar have also lost their occupation. They sit in the digesting chairs in front of the windows, and sigh for "the tender grace of a day that is dead." To be more explicit, they yawn and yawn. Never have I heard sounds expressive of such appalling boredom or laborious idleness. They start on a low minor tone, and leisurely ascend to the very top of the scale, from whence they descend in a like deliberate and well-sustained manner. These

yawns are literally tone-dramas, or what Liszt was wont to call his own musical productions—"symphonic poems." Between yawns, these men talk indifferently on indifferent topics. The dining-room adjoins the bar, and I heard it all while waiting for supper.

Stoney Plain is a village of about four hundred people, with two hotels, two pool-rooms, a barber's shop, several restaurants and stores. The bank is the most ambitious building in the place. It was brought here in sections from British Columbia, and is a wide, low house, with a motherly roof that reaches over and shelters a snug porch. A bank clerk, with the spirit of candour strong upon him, tells us the great need of the village is not electric lighting or a water system, *but just girls.* He says it with tears in his voice. It was even so in Shakespeare's time, when—

> *" . . . in France,*
> *Young gentlemen would be as sad as night,*
> *Only for wantonness."*

Poor laddie! I apologise for making merry! His desire for the friendship of girls only means that he is discomfited and homesick. A boy who has been reared in a good home and who is suddenly transported to these surroundings must, of a surety, have lonely hours of utter wretchedness. When he ceases to experience a desire for the companionship of nice girls he will no longer be a clean-minded, wholesome boy.

Sing Ho! for Robins

There is a lawyer in Stoney Plain. One might imagine in a place of this size he would have a drearily monotonous struggle for existence. Contrariwise, our Northern village barrister is a modern Midas at whose touch everything turns to gold. As a usual thing, he comes with nothing in his pocket but two hands. He rents a small office and hangs out his shingle, or rather his numerous shingles, for he sells real-estate, is a notary-public, issuer of marriage licences, municipal clerk, and auditor. He is, possibly, agent for coal and lumber firms, and acts as financial agent generally.

See how this works out. When a man comes to our village, Midas sells the newcomer a lot, upon which he draws a commission. Moreover, he searches the titles and does the conveyancing. Then, he sells his client the lumber with which to build a house and, finally, adds the modern conveniences: that is to say, a mortgage and a fire insurance policy. If the client gets married, Midas issues the licence and induces him to take out a life insurance policy. Later, Midas figures as registrar of vital statistics. This means that he is prodigiously busy all the time, and in some way or other has a grip on everyone in the community. Presently, he will become our mayor with an eye on legislative honours. Law is the sword with which a man may open the world's oyster.

Oh, yes! it was Stoney Plain about which I was writing until I was led into matters

legal. Many railway freighters are camped on the outskirts of the village. Here they live, move, and have their beans. They carry groceries, hardware, hay, and other supplies, to the contractors at work on the grade at Pembina. Wherever night finds them, the freighters tether their horses, light a fire of birch and poplar, and cook their supper. To-night their talk is what literary critics would describe as a "slice of life." The Padre is ashamed of my asking so many questions of them, and makes well-sounding comments on woman's curiosity; also, he frowns, and frowns, and frowns, and holds up an admonitory finger. Men are quite as curious as women, only they call it science or a Royal Commission.

Our room at the hotel was eight feet short by eight feet. There was no shade on the window, except a lace curtain, but this was no matter, because our room was on the third floor, and no other building in the village is so high. Besides, we have no occasion to light a lamp, it being quite clear until eleven o'clock. We agree to be astir betimes, knowing well we will have to breakfast at a restaurant. I say over and over to myself a line of Chaucer's, which I always remember because my name is the same as the heroine's:

"Up roos the sonne, and up roos Emelye."

The charming *naïveté* of it is delightsome to me.

II

The Out Trail

"And men bulk big on the old trail, our own trail, the out trail;
And life runs large on the long trail—the trail that is always new."

It is a grey, desolate morning, and the rain pours down in a dull, determined way as if it never meant to stop. It is the first we have had for eight months, and so is truly "the useful trouble of the rain."

We tent ourselves in a big umbrella and plunge through the mud. The pace that kills the Padre is the snail's pace. I should not be surprised if, when he dies, he will be punished by having to drive a dray. Inside of ten minutes I am only an animated lump of mud, for he persists in taking every pool at a rush. Well, let him! Who in this delightful land of scamps and scampers cares for such a trifle as a splash of mud?

This road was built last year by the Government. The telephone poles owe their position to the same paternal institution. It is a fairly good road for a new one, but still leaves much to be desired. It passes through a hilly district, but

not too hilly for agriculture. The land is excellent in quality and will be easily cleared, being lightly timbered with birch and poplar. We pass a small muskeg on the way, where the telephone poles are propped by several other poles and the whole wired together, the soil being too boggy to hold a stick upright.

There are a few clearings, and most of the settlers are foreigners. They are the best people to tackle new land, being thrifty and having no artificial needs. Where a Canadian would be unable to eke out a livelihood, a Norwegian is passing rich. He can live on so small an amount that I do not care to mention it. The Norwegian is not to be scorned because of this, for any man who is in the least clever can be very happy on a dollar, or even on half a dollar.

We see several whisky-jacks, or Canada jays, a brace of divers, and a huge yellow-brown hawk that dips out of the sky with wings outspread, looking for all the world like a lectern. The Padre brings down the hawk with his rifle. His Reverence learned the three R's in an Ontario public-school, but for aught I know it was the Lord who taught him snap-shooting.

There are no hotels on this road, so we consult our appetites rather than our watches as to dinner hour. This discarding of system and wooing of the accidental savours of an adventure, or of a whim of idlesse. We decide that after twelve o'clock we will turn into the first settler's house

we sight and ask for dinner. I watch for the place with the keenest anticipation.

It is a small shack with a pile of wood by the "cheek of the dure." It has two rooms, but contains three families and a servant man. They have come from the United States. I have figured it out in a dozen different ways, but cannot decide where the grandmother and the hired man sleep, there being only two beds. It is true one of the families is only visiting, but the visit has already lasted three weeks, their little girl being dangerously ill. But, even without this addition, how are these seven people to be disposed of ?

I used to think the problems about two trains passing each other, about wall paper, or about three men, A, B, and C, who finished a piece of work—which, of course, they could not without a foreman—were the most difficult the mind of man could conceive; but now I know the supreme question relates to the bedstead of a homestead in Alberta. It is a problem which even the most calculating housewife would be prudent in leaving to the settlement of the mathematician.

Our dinner is bountiful rather than appetising, and most town folk prefer black tannin to the green. As is his wont, the Padre bows his head and says silent grace. I have no doubt he is returning thanks that the fly-season is not yet. You never could believe how tame the flies are in this province.

They have the telephone in all these houses,

and pay ten cents for each call they make. By placing the receiver to your ear you may hear all the conversations on the line. This being the case, these farmers have no need of a newspaper.

No man who has a telephone can be considered a pioneer. We hear much of rural simplicity and might expect to find it somewhere in these Northern regions, but, as yet, we have not reached any such Arcadia. Charles Wagner must be right: nothing is simple any longer—not even dying.

After dinner the pigs are called to the door to be fed. They are hardy, inquisitive pigs, with long, legal, sensitive faces—all except the old sow, who is calm, corpulent, and prosaic. When I go farming I shall not feed my pigs on swill; it is a disgusting diet. I will imitate the Romans, who fed their pork on figs and cooked them with fifty different savourings. They said in Rome that the cook was a poet.

The direful continuity of the rain is disheartening. I am strong like a stone is strong, but my arms ache horribly from holding the umbrella. This road to Wabamun beggars description. Because of the rain, it is a series of crags and craters which tip the trap at a most disconcerting angle and prevent our carrying on a conversation except in interjections.

In the twelfth book of the "Code of Manu," among the oldest and most sacred of the Sanscrit writings, twenty-one hells are described, one of which is filled with mud. I think of this hell

when I come to a bog where a freighter's wagon is stuck. The other teamsters are doubling to pull it out. After much advice and some profanity the hitch is made, and then, inch by inch, and foot by foot, the gallant horses struggle and stumble through the black morass. The load lurches drunkenly, but stays with the wagon. The other wagons will have to be dragged through in the same manner. It is a weary way for man and beast, and the teamsters swear by all Alberta and the people thereof that these are the last loads they will bring down. They swear it, knowing well they lie like troopers. They could not be tied at home, for leisure, freedom, and riches come too late once a man has learned the lure of the open road.

It is now our turn to go through. I am Mistrust, but the Padre is not Timorous. He says, "She'll ride," referring to the trap, for, in Northern parlance, we "travel light." There comes a time in life when you must have courage without convictions. This is one of them. The horses strain their hearts out in desperate efforts, and ultimately succeed in landing us safely; but I am in disgrace, having gasped with terror and grabbed at the lines. I am denominated a baby—a mere baby. Ugh! what is man that thou art mindful of him?

The country through which we are passing is dishevelled and dreary, for the fire has swept across it, and left a ghostly and ghastly company of

gibbet trees in numbers no arithmetic could tell. But Nature is a healer and beautifier who follows man with a magic touch of restoration. She has scattered poppies and kinnikinic over this devastated region, and soon the spring leafery will add colour and softness to the scene.

We pass several old beaver dams that have been broken through, probably by trappers. The beaver always selected a stream deep and swift enough not to freeze solid, and took numerous other precautions for its own safety and that of its kittens. In spite of these, this animal, once so plentiful that its pelt was used as the medium of exchange between the trader and Indian, has become almost a rarity. It is a pity that the animal we Canadians have chosen as emblematic of our race should be allowed to become extinct.

Near Wabamun we passed a little, frame schoolhouse, painted with Nile green. How, in the years to come, will the big men of Alberta be able to poetise or become reminiscent about a Nile green schoolhouse? Country schools should always be red.

Every school flies a British flag. It is a good enough flag in its way, but there is much to be said for the idea of the Irish folk in having a special one for their own country. Erin's flag, d'ye mind, is green, with a yellow harp. Now, I will say it, because you cannot find me behind the book covers and your punishment may not seek me out—yes, we ought to have a Canadian

flag—yellow background, like a field of ripe grain, with a red reaper. It would be so distinctly national on the part of a colony which modestly assumes the title of "The Granary of the Empire."

The trustees find it difficult to get teachers for these schools, and still more difficult to keep them. The school may be a moated grange, in so far as it is surrounded by a muskeg, but the teacher, let me tell you, is no Mariana awailing, "He cometh not; I would that I were dead." He comes, this Western merchant, doctor, or farmer, and he means business. And what else can the trustees expect? It is only natural if you place a young man in a wilderness and a young woman in an adjacent swamp that they should gravitate to each other and end by making an *entente cordiale* with benefit of bell, book, and candle. It is merely the old story of the pistil and stamen—the attraction of the love-ripe for the love-ready.

We stopped at Wabamun, a lack-lustre village, to have tea and feed our horses. The settlement is commonly called "Dunn's," because Mr. C. H. Dunn is the man of the burgh who has to be reckoned with by all comers. He is a general merchant, farmer, postmaster, machine-agent, liveryman, and several other things. If you want your dinner or a bed, you must make good with Dunn. His store is a departmental depository, where smoke-tanned moccasins of moosehide contest the shelf-room with olives from France and oranges from California.

Although the rain keeps up its nightmarish industry, the Padre decides to start for Olsen's homestead. He is like the Kirghiz folk, who believe man must keep moving because the sun, moon, stars, water, beast, bird, fish, all move; it is only the dead that remain in one place.

We do not know how to locate Olsen's homestead, except that we are to travel a medley of trails through a bush-grown region until we come to a house beside the railway grade. In search of it, we wander hither and thither for hours, with ample opportunity to moralise upon the blessings of home. At last we decide to keep to the right and go till we drop. This is what we did, for the Padre tipped me into a quagmire. I knew he would. The remark he made was not worthy of him, but I was not in the least scandalised, it being exactly what I wanted to say. Then he denied saying it. He is a tiresome sinner, the Padre.

At Olsen's we find a railway contractor with twenty-four men and their teams. They have finished their work on the grade and are on their way to Stoney Plain, but are marooned here till the rain abates, the trails being impassable for heavy loads. We are glad beyond measure to reach this steading. The truly simple life is to be found in that place where the ordinary necessities of city life are the luxuries; where food, shelter, warmth, and a bed make you esteem yourself fortunate.

The coffee-pot purrs gently on the stove while

I cosset myself thereby and dry my clothes, for I am as wet as a minnow. Ham and eggs and potatoes never gave out so distracting an odour. And because her batch of bread is not yet baked,

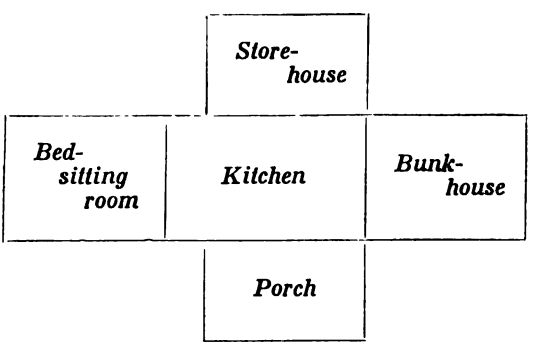
"The coffee-pot purrs gently on the stove while I cosset myself thereby and dry my clothes, for I am as wet as a minnow."

Frau Olsen makes for us biscuits. She pats them as though they were little children. Oh! it is good to be pleasantly weary and finely hungry.

The Frau does not seem in the least perturbed

by her numerous wayfaring guests. In spite of manifold interruptions, she preserves her temper. Most admirable Frau! The Padre reflects that she preserves it on the self-sealing method; that is, she keeps the mouth of the vessel tightly closed. It is not what his Excellency says that is objectionable so much as the cryptic way he says it.

When I build a house it is going to be modelled after the Olsens'. The latter is built of logs, and has four rooms which are lined with builder's paper. If you want to drive a nail in the wall, you may do so without knocking off several pieces of plaster, for every joist is plainly visible. It is truly a triumph of the utilitarian in architecture. This is the plan of it:—



In the city we must, perforce, build a three-storey house to bed and feed thirty people, but in this eminently practical building fewer rooms are required. Besides, if you will observe, the kitchen

is here the heart of the home, and has the place of honour, as it should. It is only when people keep servants—that is, when they become decadents—that the parlour or talking-room becomes the Shekinah.

When I build a house I shall make the rooms radiate from the kitchen. In it, the fire will be as inextinguishable as the Vestal Virgins', and the kettle—"an unfallen black angel"—must be of iron, always full and well forward.* It will be such a kitchen, this one of mine, as Macaulay describes in the last three verses of "Horatius," even to "the oldest cask," "the largest lamp," and the laughter.

The Olsens keep their writing-desk in the kitchen. And why not? It is a home-made desk, and so will not chip, scratch, or fall apart. They have also a man-made cabinet for dishes, which is painted in blue and scarlet, after the manner of those I saw in the Russian homes in Saskatchewan.

It is distinctly pleasant to lie in bed and hear the raindrops on the roof. These be silver bullets that seek our hurt, but we are sheltered and safe in our heavy-walled fortress. It is midnight when an immense, high man, with a voice like corrugated iron, comes into the room and reports that Grey George is dead and that they have hauled him out. I think he means a horse. He says it to Mr. John

* The Padre here points out that no unfallen angel is ever "full" or "forward."

Kerr, who lies on a couch at the foot of our bed with a sheet hung between, as a concession to good taste rather than as an effective screen. Mr. Kerr snorts unutterable things, but does not say much, for his chest hurts like mad. Besides, the Frau—who keeps making a triangle, the vertex of which is a hot and active poultice on the stove, the base the sick man's couch and her mattress on the floor—bundles the giant into outer darkness.

When I wake up in the night, I hear the haunting howls of starved wolves on the hills. They cry as if demented. I think they see awful figures hid to human eyes. Some day a Northerner will compose a piece of music of wide gamut, the theme of which will be the wail of the wolves. It will voice all that is lost, uncanny, and damned in the world.

And when the wolves are silent, there come weird night sounds and indefinable stirs of uneasiness. These be elves, gnomes, and their ilk, and they conjure spells and omens. I dare not waken the Padre, for when I hear things he calls me a cave-dweller. Celts, he says, are tainted in the blood, and are cursed with the listening ear, but I observe when he himself tells of a goblin horseman, or something that might appear wholly incredible to the uninitiated, he begins, "'Twas long ago in Ireland."

It is true, though, if you hold your breath for a little and put your head on one side, you may hear plainly, even through the walls, the maunder-

ings of a gummy crone telling about the troll who lives in these tamaracks and gluts herself with the blood of Christian men. There are baleful fiends, filthy, insatiate furies, and whimsy witches who like her story so much that they laugh madly.

Listen! Didn't you hear? 'Twas the bitter night-hag of the sleughs who yawned. Always she mopes and mows and yawns.

Of a surety, you are wrong. That guttural hiss is not of the wind. They are earth-bound ghouls liberated from the hearts of mortals. Spent vampires are they; insistent incubi, who eat up your vitality like it were bread. Their hands are icy, I know! I know! and a woman's flesh is warm. A haggish titter! lewd curses from a malefic wench; she who would break the lurid spell of the demons.

Hush! breathe softer! Lean forward a little, and put your head lower. They are close to the window-panes, the dead who whimper in the very ear of God, and this is what they say:

It is not so what the Christians say—
This lay they sing
That the dead have wing,
To wind their way
To winsome worlds.

We wander in, and we welter out
Through winding trails,
For the dead heart fails
In a fog of doubt
To find its way.

Open Trails

With hankering hands and praying lip
We search for roads,
Past grim abodes,
Where black bats sip
The sap of souls.

God-a-mercy! don't listen any more; there is insanity that way. Make the sign of the holy cross, and hide close in bed. Soon it will be dawn, and the dead like not the light.

III

Homestead Ways

It's Jane and I that love to go a-rambling,
It's Jane and I that love a cosy inn.
—R. W. GILBERT

I AWAKE to the sound of rain-swilled windows, and of a coffee-mill the camp cook is turning in the kitchen. The Padre is shaving at a tiny glass that hangs high on the wall, but now and then he moves aside to give the Frau a chance to brush her hair. The incongruity of it has not struck him, so I hide my chuckles in the pillows. He heard me though, for his ear is as acute as a cocked trigger, and he remarked it was not well to take a Parisian tape-measure to the Sahara.

There are guns over my bed, a highly varnished lithograph of the Governor-General—which, alas! is polka-dotted with fly-specks—a Christmas bell of red tissue paper, and a baptismal certificate in a frame. My bed is so comfortable I hate to get up. It is built of iron and brass, and the top mattress is of feathers. The Frau told me, last night, that her first bed was of poles. She told me all about it as she tumbled and patted the mattress and pillows into fluff. As she shook out the clean linens and "four-point" blankets, I

watched her in a languid ecstasy of expectation and a sense of the rest that remaineth. It was Burns, that great, bad boy, who wrote a poem in honour of the girl who made a bed for him.

I like this Frau Olsen. She is a "home body," and well bred, in that she has a sincere consideration for others and expresses it in a pleasant form; and you may have noticed that good breeding covers a multitude of deficiencies in either a woman or a horse.

Mr. John Kerr is telling the Padre that he has lost too many horses to be able to afford pneumonia. He also declares that if sulphur could cure him he would be in rude health, for the railway doctor prescribes nothing else, except fresh air. Indeed, he knows all the weak points in the doctor's treatment. This big, bronzed, iron-muscled bachelor, known in the west as "Profile Jack," has served in the timber-woods, on the ranches, in the mines, and for nine years on the railways as contractor; and here, to-day, he owns up to being "all in."

I fear me he is a bit of a fraud. "Good Monsieur Melancholy," I name him, after the manner of Orlando. He is ill, of course, but also he is storm-stayed, and finds it very good to be once again nursed and pothered over by a woman. I'll not hint this to the Frau; indeed, I'll not.

He is telling how bitterly cold it was last winter in the tents, and of how his partner died of pneumonia!

"We came in together," he says, "but, by the heavens, I left him there at the grade and went out alone."

'Tis an old tale this gamester of the wilderness tells; "Two . . . shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left." 'Tis a tale that will be often told so long as puny man pits himself against the North, whose dice are always loaded.

There is but one colour out of doors—a dull, grey dun. The sky is dressed in sheet iron and the rain pours down without interlude, for it has no bowels of mercy. We are prisoners, in so far as our journey is concerned, and do a deal of talking about the weather. It is a topic which has at least the merit of copiousness.

"Profile Jack has served in the timber woods."

After breakfast, I don rubbers and go with the Frau to feed her chickens; but, first, we look at her garden, although there is not anything to be seen

except square beds, and beds that are parallelograms, with little sticks holding seed envelopes. The garden is surrounded by the best five-board Canadian fence, to keep the horses and wickedly intentioned pigs from prowling over the beds.

As I tramp through the stable-yard and then in the straw, I gather so much of both that each foot looks like a bale. The poultry, all agog, come flocking to the Frau with raucous tongues and assertive manners. She feeds them on bread crumbs and frozen wheat. She only raises grey hens, for the hawks steal the white and black ones, they being more noticeable. Coyotes and skunks, a-hanker after flesh-pots, do also steal the hens, the dogs permitting.

Quite half these fowls will be killed by the Frau this winter. I should hate to eat hens I raised myself. It would seem like eating one's relatives, an act which all the world knows is not consistent with a Christian upbringing. It would not, however, owing to their sad lack of manners and morals, be so very harrowing to eat the roosters. It is a matter of gossiping history that the rooster is a thoroughgoing roué with a roundabout vision. Indeed, in many ways he may be compared with that wonderful widower, Henry VIII. The rooster will not work, but only crows and gives orders. Watch him strut before his zenana of meek, grey wives! He puffs out his chest, makes a terrible noise, with the air of a mighty fellow intent on

doughty deeds. Critics who are prejudiced make gibe of the crowing hen, but who ever heard a hen crow? It is a complete illusion of the masculine brain. At any rate, the hen has more occasion to crow than the rooster, for she it is who lays the eggs. The rooster is a bluffer and vainglorious. In his wild state the cockerel is a monogamist, but now that we have civilised and over-fed him, he has the most catholic tastes and swaggers absurdly. Indeed, he is a highly undesirable person to know, and I have no doubt, if put to it, he would deny that he crowed when Peter forswore the Galilean.

And I know more about the cockerel. Thousands of years ago he was a young man, and his name was Alectryon. How he came to be turned into a cockerel is enough to make anyone open his eyes and mouth. Mars, who would appear to have been something of a man about town, was fond of Venus, and it seems that he appreciated her for her vices rather than for her virtues. This was the beginning of it. And once when he went to visit her secretly — which was, of course, impossible, to say nothing of being highly improper — he stationed

"He has the most catholic tastes and swaggers absurdly."

Alectryon at the door, to watch against the approach of Apollo, the sun. This was the way of it. But Alectryon, who had probably been tipped beforehand, fell asleep, so that Apollo discovered the lovers. He simply opened the door or curtains, or whatever they had in those days, and walked straight in. It must have been a curtain, for the historian tells us that Apollo exhibited the lovers to all the gods, which really proves Apollo to have been a much more wicked man than Mars. Don't you think so? I do not know anything more about this shocking story except that Mars vented his vexation on Alectryon by changing him into a cockerel, and now, when he announces the approach of the sun, it is because he is mindful of his neglect.

Contrariwise, there are some advantages in being a rooster. He can roll in the sand and not soil his feathers. He can sleep standing up, and eat without chewing. He has no teeth to get pulled, and has a gizzard instead of a soul. He also possesses the supreme advantage of having no reputation to lose. Only his behoofed Majesty knows the things we might each comfortably enjoy if it were not for our reputations.

In the coops, lying-in hens brood on their precious eggs in semi-somnolent state. The Frau gives these a Benjamin's portion. And why not? I entirely agree with that author—who was he?—

who said that women, priests, and poultry never have enough.

I carry in my hat the eggs we gather. In the city, eggs come out of telephones; here, one gets them from nests. It seems a maladjustment that a hen lays about sixty eggs in the season, whereas a mosquito lays over a million. As yet only two broods of chickens are hatched out, but they are all in charge of one mother. She is an exemplary, practical-minded hen, and feels proud of her yellow-gaped, tailless weaklings. And in truth she may, for they are dainty toddlers—hen-house buds, so to speak.

On our visit, we are surrounded by a tangle of dogs barking deliriously. Seven of them belong to the Olsens; five are crosses between a mastiff and hound, one is half mastiff and half bulldog, and one has the bar-sinister of the wolf. The name of the last is Gustav. She who runs may read that they are individualistic, and would be well worth studying. These dogs are of especial use in winter, during fishing operations, in preserving from the larcenous gluttonies of the wolves fish thrown up on the ice.

The railway men have dogs too, but they particularly favour a bit of pulsating puppy life that is soft and cuddlesome as a baby, and has black eyes like shoe-buttons. It is a pity this little, white-headed fellow must grow up into a plebeian cur with a conviction that he is sent into the world to bark at horses and fight cats. I

give him scraps of food, and he licks my hand with his thin, red tongue. It looks like a dart of flame out of snow.

This homestead runs to the edge of Lake Wabamun, which is a pellucid, satin-like body of water fifteen miles long and about four miles wide, and looks like a shallow basin in which housewives "set" their milk. It is said to have been a coal-bed which was at some time consumed by fire. I stand and listen to the storm-perplexed gulls crying down the wind. They make long, looping flights in mid-air with soundless, surgeless wings. Through the ashen, filmy light they seem like swirling flakes of snow, but, in reality, they are visions of the Holy Grail.

Arrow-flighted wild ducks pass before us with snaky, out-thrust necks. They have a shrill and hunger-bold cry. It takes thirty generations to tame a teal.

Wabamun, or, as it is sometimes called, White Whale Lake, teems with white fish and pickerel. Four years ago this lake was thick with fish, and consequently they were soft and flabby, but as they were netted the quality improved. The Indians call the white-fish "Deer of the Waters." On account of its abundance we do not, in Canada, appreciate sufficiently the flesh of this splendid fish. It is only when someone from another country tastes it for the first time and describes it for us, as did Mrs. Jameson and Baron La Houton, that we realise it

to be the supreme aristocrat among the finny tribes.

The Frau, who is a Norwegian, tells me she has been in town but once in six years, on which occasion she spent two months in the hospital. Previously she lived at Lac Sainte-Anne, where she rarely saw a white woman. On account of the bad trails it took six days to reach Edmonton, and one could only travel on horseback. She was at Wabamun three years without once tasting beef, the first piece being presented to her by the Indian Agent. Wild duck, rabbits, chicken, and fish, however, were to be had in abundance.

"The Frau says she was never unhappy."

But hear, O world, and wonder! The Frau says she was never unhappy. It would seem that she

whose heart is wisely blithe has an enduring holiday. Or it maybe this Norwegian had the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. The vision of the pioneer, unlike other visions, is one that makes for contentment. But in these days conditions for the Frau are different. There are good things in the larder, and without stint; there is money in the bank, and there are the catalogues of the departmental stores on the shelf. Ah! it is good when dreams come true.

You have to live in isolation to understand the charms of a catalogue. It is a fine satisfaction to know exactly how many hundred per centum the nearest merchant is making on his goods, and to be able to tell the rapscallion if he be unduly persistent about his "account rendered." The North-country merchant takes advantage of the necessities of the farmers. He can get anything for his goods that he has the assurance to ask, and assurance seems to be the one thing grown here. He takes all the money the farmers have—and some they haven't. It is the right—nay, the bounden duty—of everyone to buy in the cheapest market, and no farmer can afford to deal with a local merchant merely for the object of swelling the merchant's bank account, or to enable him to clear out an old stock.

On the other side, we may say in defence of the merchant that his heart is often sick with hope deferred where settlement for the goods is concerned. If a farmer gives a merchant a pro-

missory note, he goes home with an idea in the back of his head that the debt is cancelled. It is a pity, but candour compels the confession that this idea is not wholly confined to farmers.

But where else is the homesteader's wife to learn, except from the store catalogue, whether her new dress should be a one-piece "jumper," or have an "empire" effect? And how is she to distinguish between, or know the merits of, tamoline, taffeta, albatross, sicilian, or panama unless she sends for samples and rubs them between her fingers? And when there is no milliner, no dressmaker, and, mayhap, no sewing-machine, within a radius of fifty miles, how is she to get blouses, hats, or underwear, except from the ever-ready catalogue? Then there is the pleasure that even less isolated women than the Frau find in selecting from the pages what one would buy, *if one had the money*. Aye; there's the rub! Now, when I get rich, I know where I can purchase a full-length coat of ermine for three thousand dollars, and Russian sables for five thousand. I often look at the pictures and show them to the family, who straightway faint *en masse*. There is, too, in this book of fascinations a robe of real crocheted lace, and a stole of white ostrich feathers, which I shall certainly include in my list. That is to say, I shall if they are not hopelessly old-fashioned, for the prospects are sufficiently remote to render such a contingency possible.

The shelf in the homestead holds also a book

of soap premiums. It may be a bother to save soap-wrappers or tobacco tags in the city, but in the country it takes on all the zest of an adventure. There is the joy of adding each cover to the already bulky pile, and of turning over the book for the fiftieth time to decide whether you will send for "The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes," a butter-knife, a picture of Her Gracious Majesty Queen Mary, a perfect alarm-clock, or a hard-enamelled brooch of Ontario design. I know what the Frau is sending for, but wild horses won't make me tell.

There are other pleasures in the country in these latter times. Once a fortnight all the settlers gather in to Dunn's and dance. In connection with this dance there are no stiff conventionalities and only one rule—each woman brings a cake and a good heart. How do I know about the good heart? From a poet:

"For the good are always merry,
Save by an evil chance,
And the merry love to fiddle,
And the merry love to dance."

When I have scraped the bales of hay from my feet, I help the Frau to get dinner—that is, I peel the potatoes, open the tins of corn, and make a pan of cakes. At home I am not considered a cooker of cakes, but I can act as understudy to the Frau. The camp cook is showing a slackness of fibre since he left the grade, and insists on

keeping the Sabbath Day holy. A big Dane, furious exceedingly, told him awhile agone that he was "a dee-vil of a fellow," and also he told him to go to grass—only it wasn't "grass" he said. The English of the Westerner is necessarily faulty, as it has been largely acquired from driving mule teams and oxen.

The cook does not answer, for he would seem to have the rare gift of silence. Secretly, I sympathise with him. Think of having to feed all those hungry mouths, month in and month out! To him all the world must look like a huge, gaping orifice with monstrous, white teeth. It must haunt him waking and sleeping. I am sure he is enjoying a fine peace this day, watching us women-folk fill the mouths. Yes! I will relieve him this once, although I will say there are things from which I get more pleasure.

After dinner I sit at the lazy side of the fire, which is the back, and listen to the little group of men as they converse upon things generally. Olsen, who sits astraddle a chair, is telling of electric currents, hot springs, and of auriferous soil, here and in British Columbia. The gold hereabout is only found in small quantities and is, he claims, a glacial deposit. For years he has sought this strangely exciting, yellow metal, but the rainbow has ever receded as the hunter advanced. It is neither dignified nor kindly for the high gods so to jest over and jeer at men. Perhaps, however, all considered, the gods may

have been good, because gold-miners nearly always die of poverty and starvation.

The motor-boat which Olsen has built to carry passengers and freight up and down the lake is decidedly more promising.

Olsen, who is a snug-built, jovial man, uses his pipe to enforce his opinions in much the same fashion as an orchestral leader uses a baton, or a woman her fan. I have never before noticed how effective a weapon a pipe may be.

The conversation drifts to the Indians on the Alexis Reserve across the lake, and to their diet. Their chief food is fish and rabbits. Although succulent, the rabbit meat contains little nutriment, and does not supply vitality. They also eat musk-rats, owls, lynx, and skunks. One of the men declares all these to be very good, and says the unpalatable meats are mink and otter, they being oily and black. We are wholly content to take his word for these festive experiments.

One splenetic, common kind of fellow who is of the company expresses the profoundly preposterous opinion that all Indians should be killed off. It is, he claims, finical to investigate if they are good or bad Indians; they are Indians—that is enough. Upon its being urged that Indian nature is only human nature bound in red and, given the same circumstances and environment, quite as good as that in white binding, this fellow replies that no one ever proved there was such a

thing as a good Indian except by killing him, and a dead Indian counts for nothing. He cannot see for the life of him how the term "Honest Injun" came to originate.

It is merely out of politeness that he turns from the men to ask my opinion about these worth-nothing folk, for no man places value on a woman's opinion unless it coincides with his own. This is why I am non-committal, and say that nothing black or red on the surface goes; it must be concealed.

The conversation veers to fishing, hunting, and trapping. One of the men describes the art of pulling hearts. It appears the trapper, in order to preserve intact the pelts of animals, pulls their hearts till the cords snap. This mode of killing is only used with the small animals the hunter finds alive when he visits his line of traps. It will not work with a bear who, like the Indian, has to be shot to be made good. The art is one which requires judgment and deftness, for an animal who has struggled for hours in a trap becomes more or less mad, and his bite is likely to prove venomous. The trapper simply pins down the animal's hindquarters with his snowshoe so that it cannot move. He then gets a tight grip on the beastie's neck with his fingers and left thumb. The head and neck are raised till the body is stretched to its limit. With the right hand, the trapper feels for the heart immediately below the bottom-rib. This he seizes and pulls

quickly towards him, at the same time pulling the animal's body in the opposite direction.

"Is it cruel?" one asks.

"No," another replies; "it dies as if electrocuted"—an answer pleasant rather than true.

Ah! my dear little wild thing, I could cry aloud for the torrent of your agony; but I have heard tell it is far better for hearts to break than to wither—a thousand times better.

IV

Prospecting

To the builders who have fallen, whose graves mark
out the line,
To the blind who never more may see,
To the maimed and halt in their misery,
In silence drink your wine.

—Evelyn Gunne

It is a spiritless, low-toned morning. Hueless mist-wraiths fume from the lake and lie heavy on the land. The atmosphere is dead and smoky, like when the sun is in eclipse.

The team can hardly pull the trap through the mud. Never was there mud like this on the Grand Trunk Pacific grade. It is like a grey cement, for it has been thrown up from a very considerable depth. There used to be on the grade a notice which was unpleasantly frank on the matter of trespassing, but we are told "a strong wind blowed it down."

The grading is almost finished in this district, only two camps being still engaged. The directors of this railway are being subjected to a carping criticism by politicians and interested detractors, because they have expended three times as much in its construction as compared with other rail-

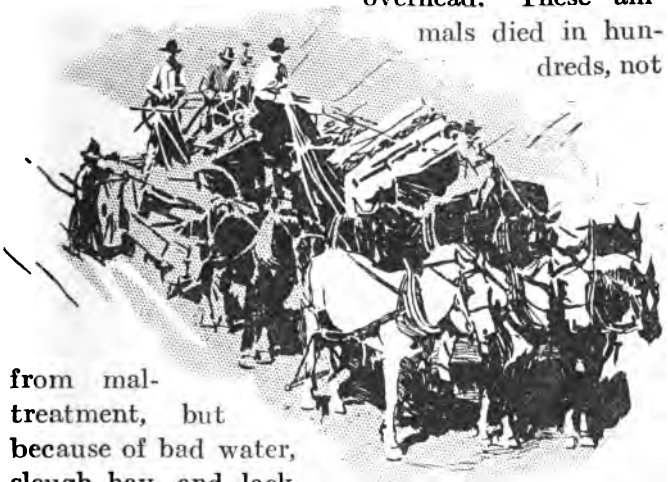
ways. Public Opinion has called them more bad names than P.O. has a right to know. And, after all, Public Opinion is only the deduction people make from the propaganda of a few pert, political writers who are paid to educate them along a certain line.

When one comes to examine this grading from a nearer view than the revolving-chair theorists, it may readily be seen that the directors have no intention of endangering their rolling stock and, incidentally, their passenger's lives, by running over cobwebs strung on a muskeg. Long life to the directors, say I, and may their tribe increase ! True and sound and solid have they laid their road-beds. They have not set up a few thin, high scantlings upon which to string their light rails and swing their heavy cars but, in every case, have built up the grades with clay and solid rock. I will undertake to say that this is a laudable method upon which to build, both for safety and for dividends. Because we of Canada are accustomed to poor roads and the consequent appalling death-rate, we have come to regard these as both ordinary and proper. Through a queer mental astigmatism, we are utterly discomfited because, forsooth, a corporation is trying to give us something very close to perfection.

The directors who build a railroad hastily and with an eye to future props may successfully avert waste at the spigot, but at the bunghole they are allowing it to go out unchecked. Railways are not

built on Faith, Hope, and Charity. The builders must have millions to spend, and they must spend them. The laying of a road like this is comparable with nothing but the moving of the mountains. Indeed, it does actually move mountains.

All along the grade we see dead horses, flaccid and unstrung, their plump undertakers flying overhead. These animals died in hundreds, not from maltreatment, but because of bad water, sleugh hay, and lack of shelter. God alone knows the terrible toll of life that is taken by a trans-continental trail. Indeed, after all, I am not so sure that He does.



"The grading is almost finished in this district."

It is not until one comes north that one realises the part the tin can has had in the making of Empire. There be folk—silly, silly folk—who sneer at "tinned stuff" and say, "Boiled turnips for me!" yet, without the plebeian can, one may

properly question the possibility of settling this country. Turn over with me this mound of empty tins and see what we have: salmon, condensed milk (this is a land that flows with condensed milk), beef, syrup, peaches, baking-powder, sardines, lard, coffee, corn, jam, and marmalade. Cut these out of our Northern commissariat, and where are we?

I did not mention the tomato can. I supposed you would take it for granted. In this country, it is a long trail that has no tomato tin. It was Goldsmith who said that the French would be the best cooks in the world if they had butcher's meat, for they knew how to make ten dishes out of a nettle-top. The same applies to a Northern cook and a tin of tomatoes. He may be no hero, and entirely ignorant of what is known among domestic science experts as "modern culinary art," but, nevertheless, he can cast something like a spell over a tin of tomatoes. People write odes to wheat, grapes, olives, and other homely edibles; I bespeak the pen of a genius on behalf of the tomato.

Next to the tomato can the whisky bottle figures most prominently. From the number of them, and from their labels, one may readily see that, like mercy, their quality is not strained, nor their quantity restrained. Yet, one never sees an intoxicated man, so it is possible that they only keep the bottles for show. I ask one of the camp cooks about it as he dissects a freshly-killed sheep.

Prospecting

"We just keep a nip to flavour the sleugh water. Nothing, ma'am, is so good as a sup of whisky and water," and here he winks a wicked eye, "except another sup. It beats me clean out, ma'am, how the Lord came to invent anything so tame as water."

This camp cook, it would seem, is not only a connoisseur but also something of a philosopher.

Whenever we come to bridges, the Padre puts the horses straight down the side of the grade and lets them ford the streams, which are much swollen by the rain. Woe is me! What grades these are! They might be the neck-or-nothing slopes down which the Gadarene swine rushed to perdition. The Padre leads the horses and I hold on to the back of the trap, acting as a brake. In the descent I accumulate mud just as a snow-man gathers snow when rolled over and over. Then we sit at the foot of the hill and laugh at each other like two sillies. Prospecting for coal is not nearly so serious a business as one might imagine. And yet I hope my man may not find coal. Once before he said he would buy a mine or "bust." He did both. (He does not burn his money, the Padre; he buries it in lignite and bitumen for other folk to burn.)

The most trying thing about prospecting is looking for survey lines. I have to watch to the left, and my eyes and neck ache with the strain. If I look away for a second, we are sure to pass one. This happened several times,

upon which occasions I learned I had not a friend in the world, was absolutely of no account, and had no more head than St. Denys. Then I confused town-site surveys and the railway "try lines" made in reconnaissance work with the section lines, thus adding vastly to my shame and confusion.

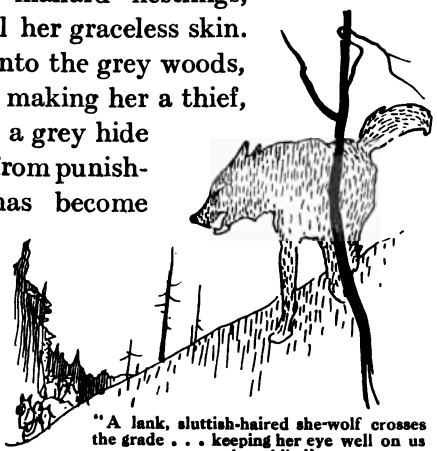
In Alberta the surveyors sometimes use four holes and a stake as delineation marks, instead of a mound and a stake. In the woods there is always, of course, the sky-line. One soon learns up North that a country is of little practical value before it is surveyed. We may not write in the open volume of the land until the hardy young men of the transit have ruled off the pages. The civil-engineers are the advance guards of the army of material progress—the men who work the "quite impossible" with their war-cry, "Put it through!"

It is the habit in Egypt to loiter over a barren spot and say, "Here stood Memphis," or, "This is the site of Babylon, Thebes, or Nineveh." In this new and better land we may walk over fresh soil and say with constructive vision, "Here will stand a great town or city not yet named. This row of surveyor's pegs will represent the main thoroughfare. The market-place will probably stand here, the railway station over there, and beyond will be erected churches, colleges, theatres, banks, and great commercial houses."

Over the sea, cribbed in old-world cities, there

are divinely discontented men who little dream of these rows of pegs in the undergrowth of this northern forest, or of how they or their children will come hither to help us make these streets and lay these stones, and well and truly build this newer and wider city. It requires no stretch of imagination to see it all. Are we not building such places every day? Assuredly, this is the spot at which one must inevitably do homage to Terminus, the god of landmarks, whose statue has ever been a rude post set in the ground to denote boundaries.

As we drive along, a lank, sluttish-haired she-wolf crosses the grade with a sidelong movement, keeping her eye well on us the while. She is wily as Pecksniff, this nobody's child. She pretends to be looking for rabbits, but is really hunting for chickens, or mallard nestlings, wherewith to fill her graceless skin. As she slithers into the grey woods, I can see that in making her a thief, and in giving her a grey hide to safeguard her from punishment, Nature has become her *particeps criminis*.



"A lank, sluttish-haired she-wolf crosses the grade . . . keeping her eye well on us the while."

All the morning the sun has shown through a glass darkly, but now

it has come forth nakedly, and animal and bird life are awaking in sympathy. The robins seem to have gone love-mad. They do cake-walks and other well-known antics, with elegantly lascivious motions, try to peck each other's eyes out, or, with riotous, bountiful notes, chase their sweethearts into the air. Glad is not the word, nor ecstasy, for the way they wing the air this Maytide morning.

Out, too, are the blackbirds with their little prying faces, bold and keen. The scarlet V with which Nature should have branded the wolf, the true *voleur*, or robber, has been stupidly transferred to the wing of the inoffensive blackbird. This is why I call her Hester Prynne. Her beautiful, dusky throat is iridescent with vitality. No doubt it is throbbing by reason of the sweet, thriftless words of some black Don Juan who has followed hard after her from southern climes. Happily, little black lady, happily one seldom dies of joy!

The partridges are drumming in the woods. They are scarce in Alberta, and one rarely hears them.

The first butterflies of the season flutter around us in taunting abandon. Sometimes they look like flower-petals set loose by the breeze, and, again, they are as white palms that open and close in prayer.

The dogs are questing after rabbits with a wondrous zeal and single-mindedness. I can

imagine " the life of a dog " being enjoyable after all. Nearly all our dicta and comparisons need to be put differently.

We stop awhile at Willetts' homestead. He is an Englishman who has settled down to farming. His ambition seems to be the raising of apples. He tells me he was successful last year, and even preserved some of them.

" Were they real apples, or only crab-apples ? " I query incredulously.

" *Real* apples—*not* crabs," he replies emphatically.

" Show them to me, my good sir ! show them to me."

Aha ! but I have you now, Willetts. You are a Northern man, so your sense of proportion is necessarily enlarged where fruit is concerned. He produces them. They are only crabs—puckery, smooth-skinned, diminutive crabs.

Burroughs said the apple followed man wherever he settled, like his dog or his cow. His statement is remarkable chiefly because it is not true. Pomona has not emptied her cornucopia over Alberta. She is a left-minded minx and should be ashamed of herself. But hope dies hard in the breast of a would-be orchardist, and every Albertan studies pomology. This Willetts being has planted Northern Spies, Greenings, and other well-known varieties, on a sunny hill sheltered from the white north wind. I hope his dream may some day come true, for it is only the hopelessly old who

can calmly consider a homestead without the musk of apples mellowing to the fall. Besides, apples are sorely needed to thin the blood of these men, who eat daily three to five meals of meat, with entrées of eggs, fish, and game.

But, all said and done, even crab-apples are not to be sniffed at. They make better jelly than any other fruit excepting, perhaps, wild grapes. With the aid of sugar, spices, orange-juice, almonds, and wine, we can make out of crab-apples crafty dishes that would satisfy the most jaded and club-debauched appetite. There is hardly any doubt, either, that "Eden's dread probationary tree" bore natural, or wild, fruit. It was not yet cultivated, and must have been the same as the crab-apple one may pick, even to this day, in the Orient—a bitterly sour little runt, about one-third of an inch in diameter.

Woman has always been deceived in the shade of the old apple tree. I don't wonder Eve would not stay in Eden. The Padre says she could not have stayed even had she so desired. If his contention be a correct one, the man with the flaming sword must have been more marble-hearted than any soldier I know of. Besides, I have always believed this man with the sword to have been Michael, the archangel, whose name and profession indicate his Irish extraction. This fact would make Eve's position doubly assured, but I do not dare say this to the Padre, for in debate, as in valour, discretion is often the better part.

Prospecting

Willetts, the crab-apple grower, is an erstwhile ranger, and has snaked the engineer's chain all through this myriad-acred North. What things he could tell!

Engineers of this day are between the devil and the deep sea where their business and domestic relations are concerned. The Tsar of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway has decreed that no construction engineer may have his wife nearer than seventy-five miles.* When one considers that the engineer is working in a wooded country without means of transportation, it may be figured out that seventy-five miles means a journey of three or four days. Under these ungentle conditions Cupid must, of necessity, retire to obscurity and hide his head under his wing. They do amazing things, these Tsars. The unmarried engineers seem to resent the isolation from the society of the ladies quite as much as the Benedicts. But think you they wear the willow? Not so! Last winter some young engineers I know pumped a jigger in one hundred and twenty miles to Edmonton, to dance at the hospital ball. And in one district, where there were a few married women and girls, the engineers gave a dance. They had salts of lemon sent from Edmonton to make the lemonade. They mixed it with sugar and claret, and set it away in a tub. I am told the mixture tasted well, and that all drank freely, but it took the combined and herculean efforts of

* This decree has recently been rescinded.

several doctors, and not a few quarts of whisky, to save the party alive. Merrymaking in camp is a serious matter north of latitude fifty-three.

But I was telling you about Willetts. They call him "Colonel" here, for in rural Alberta—as in the southern states of America—titles go by chimneys. If a man has two chimneys to his house, he is a colonel; four make him a general.

All the way along this railway grade one keeps regretting that every contractor seems imbued with the idea that he must fell twice as many trees as he can utilise. Like the Visigoths, what he cannot take he will not leave. If it were not that Nature uncomplainingly hastens to throw a green veil over the rude angles and scars made on her fair face by Man the Destroyer, the whole land would be a vast wilderness.

A preacher once drew attention to the fact that the trees sing and sigh, but never swear. This constitutes the trouble. Northern workmen do not respect anything that does not swear. In ninety-nine cases out of the hundred, the survival of the fittest only means that the survivor has at his command a fertile and ingenious collection of oaths.

My man is of the opinion that the menace to the trees lies in the fact that they cannot run away, but I think even flight would not save them, for the fools would chase hard after. It would be better to kill the fools.

We take dinner at a contractor's camp. Super-

ficial folk might object to the fleas, but those who delve into the heart of things will recognise them as symbolical of the activity and optimism of the country. Our hostess is a very large woman from the United States. She keeps saying, "Yes, ma'am," with a peculiarly broad yet rising accent. It rides over all other sounds and voices just as the E-flat clarinet dominates a whole brass band. Her face is a strong one. It is really a thought, but I am not able to read it. Her eyes are bright as fire. Her two sons work with her. They have lost thirty-four horses on this contract, but still expect to make four thousand dollars in profits.

I asked another contractor about this, and he said she was trekking towards a large horizon. After a prolonged whistle, this gentleman further explained that the railway's "tin god" had not yet classified or measured up the work, which appraisement, I glean, is likely to put another aspect on the profits. I hope he is quite wrong, and that this good woman's faith may have no such grim Olivet.

While the horses are feeding, I wander out alone over the hills. All the water, charged with the joy of spring, runs southward. Filtering, as it does, through beds of coal and gravel, it is clean and sweet as newly fallen dew. One is not irreverent in calling it a heavenly tipple, for does not the shepherd singer of Israel tell us it is even God who sendeth the streams into the valleys which run among the hills? It is good to lie face

downward on the earth and lap up the water and lave in it. These be living springs, and restore one as does the touch of a cool hand on fevered eyes. The prevailing chord of human life seems to be weariness. There is always the sensing of weight, no matter how high life may be strung —this, mayhap, to keep the balance true. Good Mother Nature is a beneficent healer and a kindly inspirer. We come to her an-hungered from the places of men, and from out the sordid clutch of the years, and she feeds us with the bread of life.

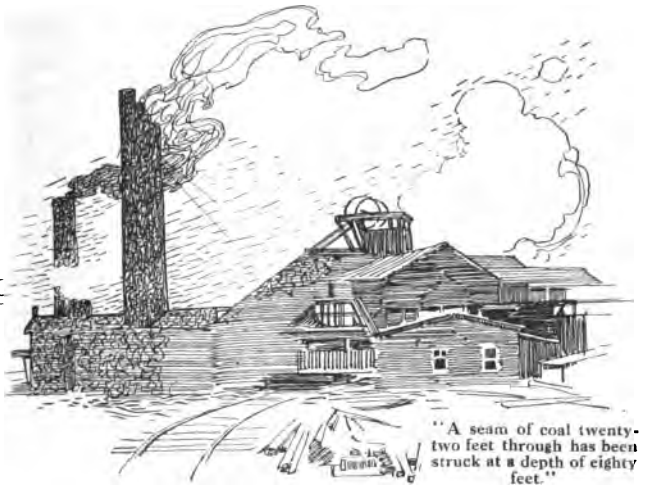
For hours I climb these hills with the Padre. Up, up, up we go, and then, like the Duke of York's ten thousand men, we march down again. The moss hangs on the trees like long fleeces on sheep before shearing time. But it is with the ground we are chiefly concerned. The Padre has taken options on the coal-rights that lie north of the lake and adjacent to the railway. His strip is eight miles long, and a mile wide, and he is trying to decide on the best places to sink test holes. I like his element of chance in prospecting; it places us on the knees of the gods.

"Huh!" snorts my fellow-farer, "'tis a poor name for the bankers."

In some spots along the grade, the earth's gullet has been slit and the hidden treasure laid bare. In other places we walk over beds of solid brick, both white and red. These testify to a coal stratum that has been burned out and, in the process, has baked the superimposed clay.

Prospecting

Near here, a seam of coal twenty-two feet through has been struck at a depth of eighty feet. It is very hard, with a large proportion of fixed carbon. Of a surety, this land dreams not half the promise the gods have given. Alberta has no past to speak of, but it has a future beyond comprehension. Tut! I bite my thumb at the past. A past may



"A seam of coal twenty-two feet through has been struck at a depth of eighty feet."

be as great a detriment to a country as to a woman.

When I am too tired to climb any more, the Padre leaves me at Fred King's homestead. Mr. King is a bachelor, whether from choice or necessity I am unable to say. His house is scrupulously tidy and he offered to make tea for me, but I do not wish to keep him from his work. He has all the furniture a Northern bachelor requires—a

stove, an arm-chair, a table, a package of patent buttons, a bookshelf, tobacco, matches, a lamp, a couch, a gun, and a few kitchen utensils. The prints on the wall indicate that, like Sam Weller, he is fond of "pootiness and virtue."

Mr. King has a snow-white Eskimo dog called Fanny. She circles around her master, always keeping an eye on me as though I had horns and hoofs. As in other circles, Fanny is simply playing the fond, jealous mother to an eligible young bachelor. Like Fanny, the hens in the yard are also white. Not one has a coloured feather. The first brood were brought in from the United States. There is a young brood of feathered cheepers pattering and tumbling around their mother. They have learned to scratch, so their heads and legs seem simply appendages to their stomachs. To this young matron, life is real, life is earnest. This is why I may not go near her chickens. She is a hussy of a hen—a perfect firebrand—and I am more afraid of a hen that ruffles out her feathers, or a goose that hisses at me, than of bears or wolves. The rooster, too, is an ungentle, stiff, opinionated fellow, and I know not what besides. He flaps his wings and says things that sound like "*That* woman! That *Woman!*" By way of spite I throw a clod on him, whereupon he flies to the fence and crows as if there were no such thing as a butcher's knife in the whole world.

A Spaniard who knows much about roosters told me about them, but I have forgotten it nearly

all. . . . Oh, yes; I remember! Every seven years the rooster lays a tiny egg. It is hard as stone, and black. If not destroyed by the hens, it will hatch out a devil who will kill the head of the household inside of a year.

The only wise rooster I ever heard of was the one of which Lord Dufferin tells. It committed suicide by flying into the Arctic Sea. If the incident came from a less authoritative personage, it would be said that he was an accomplished romancer.

Around the house there is a patch of freshly ploughed land. It gives up a sweet, humid scent that makes a little clutch in my throat. It is Nature's incense to labour. In all the world there is no odour so subtle. No alchemist, however skilled, has been able to distil it, this hot, moist odour that rises up from the leaf mould.

I, Janey, was in the spirit on this May day.

V

Windows

Let me live in a house by the side of the road,
Where the race of men go by—
The men that are good and the men that are bad,
As good and as bad as I.
I would not sit in the scorner's seat,
Nor hurl the cynic's ban,
Let me live in a house by the side of the road,
And be a friend to man.

—Sam Walter Foss.

I am too sleepy and tired to go prospecting in the morning, so stay snugly indoors. It would seem that travel and travail are the same words. The Padre says I allow myself to become debauched with emotions. He is probably right, except that he should have said "over-exhilarated." Debauchery is a raw emotion of the blood, a riot of the senses which some miscall life. It is never found in nature.

I spend most of the morning reading the Bible. Apart from any moral consideration, it is, by all odds, the most fascinating literature in the world. I open at random, and read I. Chronicles, the 25th chapter, which is a manual for church choirs containing, as it does, The Order of the Singers. I am much taken with an expression in the third

verse—"*Who prophesied with a harp.*" The words open whole fields of delight for the artist, musician, poet, and scholar.

Once more, at random, I read of Ahithophel, who "put his household in order, and hanged himself." Now, Ahithophel, it will be remembered, was an orator and a politician.

And then I read about Lot's wife. I am never tired of reading about her. The naked solemnity of the story fascinates me. When I was a child, I disbelieved it; now, I know it is true. I know all women, from warm, palpitant flesh and blood, turn into pillars of salt—that is, if they live long enough.

I watch out of the window and quickly call Frau Olsen when anyone comes in sight on the grade. There were three teams passed this morning, and several pedestrians. This, you may know, is almost a procession. The Frau knows the name of each man, and what is his probable errand. In the country people have a large, fine setting. Anyone might write volumes on the men who pass the Frau's window; but why should anyone write volumes? Why should anyone sell all he has and give to the poor? Why? Except that it enables you to discover yourself. It is not necessary always to write the whole truth, for the evasions are quite as effective to your enlightenment. And it is oft-times dangerous to one's peace of mind to look out of a window. History teems with examples. David composing a psalm

—mayhap, the *De Profundis*—dropped his quill, looked out of a window and saw Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite; and it was from her window at Whitehall that Mistress Bridget Ireton, my Lord Protector's prim and saintly daughter, first saw that dashing dandy, George Villiers Duke of Buckingham. But taking everything into consideration, I am persuaded it is safer to look out of windows than into them.

After dinner, the railway teams pull out for Stoney Plain. Such a tangle of men and dogs! And such bellicose men! Things straighten out, by degrees, when the lead train gets off. In and out among them angles the Boss, asking questions rather than stating facts.

"Don't you know, you blundering thickhead, that Bay Bob is a wheeler?"

"Why don't you go and be a pigsticker? Don't you see the tugs are a mile too long?"

He is a dynamo in derry jeans, this camp boss, and everything seems to catch his radio-activity. I must have been listening with an open mouth, for "Curly" confides:

"Ol' man talks fifteen to the dozen, he does, but we-uns sure cottons to him."

Alert, careless of comfort, rude yet gentle, ready to take the lead with an oath or a jest, "th' ol' man" is typical of a race of big men who are inevitably drawn to the ultimate posts, or wherever new things are to be built in a new country.

Windows

This is a day splendid as fine gold. It is an offence to call sun-worshippers pagans. They are Southrons who do. Down by the lake, the marsh-marigolds are abloom. They belong to the *ranunculaceæ*, which means "little frogs"—this because of their moisture-loving character. I like them almost better than any flower. They seem home-made.

Another plant growing in this marsh is the Labrador tea. It wears its winter flannels all the year and produces blossoms that are white and fragrant. I have never tasted the brew off its leaves, but am told it has an exhilarating effect.

A whisky-jack shares my solitude. With prodigious mendacity he hops within reach of my arm. He should be more careful; there come faults in the human strata as in rocks. He is a homely bird and cannot sing—at least, the Padre once said so. And the Padre said a bird who could not sing and a woman who could not cook ought to be taught. I did not make answer to this, for I wished to leave the impression that it was not worth answering. As a matter of fact I had nothing to say.

The yellow-green eyes of Spring are beginning to peep through the branches of the birch tree. Spring is a long-legged tomboy, and there is no saying what this graceless creature has up her sleeve. How I would like to catch her with my hands! The birch, so common hereabout, is a very useful tree. Its silver-plated bark, even when

wet, will burn like tinder, and every woodsman looks for it when a fire has to be lighted. Its sap may be used for making tea or boiling with oatmeal. I have heard, too, that the sap will make sugar, but I do not know this as a hard-fisted fact, for you must prove all things in this Northland where the men-folk think it fun to spin yarns to the unsuspecting stranger who lends a credulous ear.

Long ago, people used to call the birch the "makepeace tree," because of its frequent use in quelling the spirits of over-strenuous boys. In those olden times, no boy was properly punished without a birch-rod. Five hundred years ago, if essayists may be trusted, no one dreamed of using a shingle, a slipper, a hair-brush, or a razor-strop, those unkindly instruments of haste and bad temper. While the uses of the birch have changed with the centuries, boy nature remains the same, whatever the Darwin folk may say. But, levity aside, may it happen that, someday, someone will propose to us Northern folk the propriety of decorating our churches with the birch at Whitsuntide, or "White Season," just as the north Germans do. For aught I know, the Greenlanders are right in believing it was the only tree that grew in Paradise.

I have been spending quite half an hour watching a comfortable-bodied, honey-mad bee dipping into the flowers. She belongs to the solitary, or hermit, bees who make their nests in the ground and exist in pairs, the female alone forming the nest and

providing the food for the grubs. I like this way of living better than that of the socialistic hive, where the females kill off the males just as Cleopatra slew the slaves who had satiated her lust. In the socialistic hive the female can boast more of the delicacy of her susceptibilities than of the constancy of her devotions. But it may be that the bees are wiser as the world wags than we with our thin veneer of morality and seven deadly sins. I don't know.

"A comfortable-bodied honey-mad bee."

Tolstoy says the old relations between the sexes are falling to pieces and are evolving into new forms. If the life of Tolstoy which I read some years ago be a reliable one, we may deduce therefrom that Tolstoy, on account of his pre-nuptial experiments, is wholly competent to speak with authority on this matter.

But not for nought may one muse on the bees or Tolstoy, since the mosquitoes are beginning to take on an importance of which they are in no wise worthy. The serpent of Northern Edens is the mosquito. In truth, someone told me the other day that the word Beelzebub meant king of mosquitoes. Be that as it may, the Northern insect is more vindictive and voracious than any other mosquito, and from its swiftness, size, and bite would appear to be a cross between the weasel

and the teal. Being insects of discrimination, they drink my blood in preference to the Padre's, a fact which, however, will probably prevent my dying of apoplexy.

"Yes, yes!" says the Padre, with an air of innocence and scientific abstraction. "Yes, yes! their habitat is Alberta, and their diet is refuse."

VI

Open Furrows

The walls of my flesh are a-shiver,
My hate of towns at the flood,
God give me the woods and the river,
When the run of the sap's in my blood.
—C. B. GOULD.

ON every patch of clearing they are planting potatoes—planting, planting, planting; strong arms and long furrows. It does look as though, this year, we shall not have to pay freight on potatoes from Nova Scotia or even from British Columbia. The girls are planting potatoes, too. It is better exercise than golf. They have happy faces and fine, supple-sinewed bodies, these country girls. As yet they have not learned the painful passwords, "Who is she?" and know nothing of taffeta skirts, convenient cynicisms, nervous prostration, or what the vulgar, but withal practical, journalist describes as "vague, purple yearnings after the whatness of the ain't."

At one steading, a young couple are sawing down a tree that threatens their little home. So intent are they on the task that they do not see us drive by. I wonder if this young wife will say, as did the one in Will Carleton's "First Settler's

Story," : " We did that pretty well." I think she will.

The sun is straight overhead and, to-night, I will find the embroidered pattern of my dress yoke burnt into my neck and shoulders, as with a hot iron. This is a trick of Old Sol in Alberta. The sun shines here always, or nearly always—a fact which gives us more happiness than even the estimable statistics issued by our local Boards of Trade.

Did I say a few days ago, on my way out, that spring was not yet ? It seems a new world since then—a world that has silently but swiftly thrilled back to life. The air is full of indistinct, delicious whispers of voices that have been muffled and hidden, God alone knows where. The fields are velvet with the indescribable green of winter wheat that has lain long under the snow. Calyx-prisoned buds are swollen and heavy with sweet promise, and the land is clothing herself with verdure as a bride adorning for her husband.

You never properly appreciate spring until you have lived out the long—terribly long—winter in this Northland. Its return enables you to fasten to life again. Nature is alert, and everywhere there are vague potencies that elude the touch like half-frighted things. If you have been crossed in love and would forget, you must never come North in the spring.

Our preachers and teachers disquiet themselves in vain about race-suicide and, at the same time,

make collections to convert the women who worship the Ganges, the Nile, or the sun, oblivious of the fact that all these are symbolical of fecundity I have a shrewd idea that a short return— relapse, if you will—to Nature worship and to primitive conditions would do more to swell the vital statistics of America than centuries of sermons, however fitly spoken. Our flaxen Saxon mothers bore children with ardour and, under the same conditions, we would too.

As they pass along the road, the settlers have an agreeable way of saluting each other, or strangers. They are not suspicious, as we are in the city; or it may be that caste distinctions lose their sharpness, and men have here a sense of kinship with each other. There are times when it is good to be exclusive—when you want to write, to enjoy nature, or to read your love's letter—but the country road is not one of them. There is a sense of adventure in meeting people and talking with them; besides, there is so much to be learned from the unsophisticated. In this respect of adventure, it is the same in town. If you cross over the street you may talk with someone who tells you a piece of news, or makes a proposition, or gives you a thought that may change the routine of your life. Indeed, which side of the street you take may be fraught with momentous issues. It has always been my opinion, too, that in the street the man should bow to the woman first. It is a mark of respect which corre-

sponds to his taking off his hat before her in an elevator, or the cigar from his mouth while she passes. It is a mark of respect which she need not acknowledge unless so minded.

We meet a settler with a unique team—a horse and an ox. Paul of Tarsus must have seen something like this when he coined the expression "unequally yoked." This ox is a comfortable, well-nourished beast, while the horse is a subdued-looking runt whose forelegs would not commend him as a saddler. We meet, too, the Pembina Stage. It is pumpkin-coloured and, as ballast, has only a bag of mail and one passenger—a good-looking Chinaman. When Chinamen become stout they become more prepossessing. There are many Chinese in this district, and considerable antipathy is displayed towards them, but, to my thinking, we need these men of consuming energy, of strong arm, of strong courage, from the antipodal hemisphere. Apart from either blood loathing or Christian brotherhood, simply as a cold, hard question of dollars and dividends, to refuse to use this force that is asking for entrance at our portals is to suffer serious financial loss. We may succeed for a time in excluding these outlying breeds, but it is only for a time.

At this hour it makes little difference to Canadians what the Chinese dream. Their ideals, to us, are like a wheel within a wheel; but he is hiding his head in the sand who does not see that the day is almost here when the Chinese will think

and do for themselves. It requires no seer to know that humanity is to be thrown into a common melting-pot, but no seer may tell what impress the coinage will bear. Now that the world has come under one umbrella, no country or people may live to themselves. Love, both fraternal and sexual, will be the alchemy—the great catholicon or universal solvent—that will make for a universal citizenship. We are learning, even now, that our common traits lie deeper than caste, colour, trade, or politics, in the depths of a common humanity. This is why the so-called " yellow peril " is not to be extinguished by the breath of the mob. As easily might they blow out the sun.

We take dinner at the most pretentious farm-house we have yet seen on our journey. It has a parlour with a carpet, stiffly-starched Nottingham curtains, an organ, and painted satin cushions. There are photograph albums, too, so I do not lack for entertainment.

"We meet, too, the Pembina Stage. It . . . has only a bag of mail, and one passenger—a good-looking Chinaman."

Old photographs are interesting. Each

is an epistle which he who runs may read. Here is a family group—father, mother, and seven children—posing before the camera, as cold and unresponsive as a row of tombstones. The girls look like their father, the boys like their mother, for it is thus nature keeps the balance true. There are pictures of bridegrooms and brides taken on their wedding trips. These are the best; the young folk will probably never again look so carefree or be so well clothed. This is the high tide of their hearty, homespun lives, and no time could be better chosen to preserve their features for their children and grandchildren.

There are pictures of men and women reproduced from tin-types, or from old, faded photographs; pictures of babies; of young men with their hair drawn down over their foreheads in the "butcher's curl," and sometimes one of the family doctor or the parish clergyman. I have an old album something like this at home, which I never show. It contains the portraits of all my kinspeople who have died. I hope, someday, when I am worthy to hear, my guardian angel will come close enough to tell me how it fares with them. In it there are two little children I long to hear about with a great longing. No one need ever say they are not wanting me; I could never be so persuaded.

VII

At the Show Fair

There is a world outside the one you know,
To which for curiousness, 'ell can't compare.
—KIPLING.

THERE is no good and sufficient reason why I should not ride out and meet the Indians. They are to be the guests of the citizens during Fair Week, and I am a citizen even if I may not vote as to how I shall be taxed, or how I shall be hanged. Yes! I shall ride out, and say "Good welcome to this place!"

There are seventy-five wagon loads of Indians in the procession, and I have the distinction of being the only citizen. I feel guiltily white. I ride ahead with the young men and the chiefs, up the hills, down the hills, through the streets, across the river, down the golf-links, and out to the camping-grounds under the shadow of the old Hudson's Bay Fort. My esquires have been three days coming in from the Reserve. They are not talkative till I offer to trade horses; then it is my turn to take refuge in silence. Did I understand you to say the Indian has no genius for grasping essentials? Did I?

It only took four minutes to hoist the tepee

poles and shroud on the canvas. It would probably have been done in three if I had not turned the poles wrong end up.

The girls are brightly good-humoured and intelligent. Marie Louise has a mouth the colour of blood-lilies. God told her to laugh with it, and He has inclined her heart to keep this law. The men-folk tether the ponies—stealthy-footed ponies, with absurd, knitted garters tied round their necks—cut the wood, light fires, and amuse the papooses.

The only problems here are those of bread and butter. They do not even worry about elective affinities. I warn you they are a commonplace lot.

The bucks unlace the moss-bags, cocoons, or whatever the casings may be called, and free the babies' hands. Soul o' me! but a Cree brave may have a soft, wheedling tongue. The old women sit around and smoke. Their faces bear the imprint of monotony. This tottering beldame, with skin like a wrinkled prune, is the very sybil who had already lived seven hundred years when Æneas went to Italy. She gave Æneas instructions, you remember, how to find his father in the infernal regions, and even conducted him to the very entrance of hell.

While the meal is being cooked, sundry of the young men play cards. There be philosophers who say the cheerful loser is winner. This has no application to poker. All the cheerful loser

gets is experience. These youths have a good method in that they do not hold a post-mortem inquest on each hand, as white folk do. The game's the thing!

What are these Indians eating? I do not know. It is some part of the insides of animals with which I am not familiar. It looks tough. But, after all, what the Indian eats does not matter so much as what he digests; and then he can eat what he wants to in Lent.

Some of the men have long hair and wear their blankets toga fashion, just as the lawyers do in the Royal Courts of Justice, in the Strand. One old, old man is particularly mark-worthy. He has a gaunt old head that might have been modelled with a tomahawk, and a chest like a draught horse. His eyes are bright bronze, and look out from under his brows like Q.-F. guns from their portholes. He and his old mate-woman are pitiably poor. I hope they are chums. How else could

"He has a gaunt old head that might have been modelled with a tomahawk."

they live on? If I had the dictatorship of creation, men and women would be born thirty and remain thirty. Babies would be a separate race of beings—just as angels are—and should exist merely for purposes of discipline.

In one tent a white man of thirty or up lives with a squaw. He may be unhappy but, be it said to his credit, he lives out his mistake gamely. All teachers and literary critics are agreed that the hero of "Locksley Hall" is a most romantic fellow with a praiseworthy philosophy of life. Yet at one time he seriously considered the desirability of being "mated with a squalid savage," of rearing an iron-jointed, supple-sinewed brood who would whistle back the parrot's call and hurl their lances in the sun. He greatly desired this, but, in the end, he was a coward, and ranted and canted about "the Christian child." He made a virtue out of his impotence, this philosopher with the covetous eyes, and was not big enough to break the conventions that stood in his way.

It is so easy to be good; it requires no effort at all. Only strong people may sin with impunity; only greater ones may live up to their sins. Those who fail are outcasts. There is only a finger's fillip between a hero and a rogue. For my part, I think this philosopher was a prig and weakling, and that Cousin Amy did well "to sympathise with clay."

While there are positive disadvantages in the Indian's method of living—such as the unæsthetic

intimacies of wedded life in an 8 by 12 tent—on the other hand there are superlative compensations. They have no perpetual arrears of unfinished work, and they know nothing of transcendentalism, microbes, or Mrs. Eddy. They do not pay taxes, have no "at home" days, do not have to re-bind their skirts, and get no offensive yellow bills intimating that their water supply will be cut off at the main unless promptly paid for. They need not serve on a jury, or in the militia. They need not Fletcherise their food, need not shave, and never heard of a financial stringency. They keep their appendixes inside, where they properly belong, and their children know nothing of a punctual, pitiless school-bell. Of what other blessed race can this be said? Not even of the early Christians!

"They do not pay taxes."

The Persians taught their children three things—riding, truthfulness, and archery. Even so the Indians. There are quite a few of us who think we might imitate them with advantage.

So far as I am able to deduce from the conversations I have heard, the Indian's deadly and

unpardonable sin lies in the fact that he has not made money. And how, pray tell me, can a man make money when his blood is mixed with the sap of trees?

* * * * *

To resume the argument, I know the philosopher in " Locksley Hall " was a coward, because I am one too. When I would do evil, good is ever with me. I am afraid to sin. Of the consequences ? Yes ; but more particularly of Miss Rose Elizabeth. She always wore mauve in her Sunday caps, and sat with lowered eyes, and hands folded in her lap. It is a long time since I saw her, but I have seen pictures like her in some room at the National Gallery. They must have been among the portraits of the Italian saints. I repeated collects to her for years. Out of my little throat rolled the prayer that " so among the sundry and manifold changes of the world our hearts may truly there be fixed where true joys are to be found."

It was surely a wistful, incongruous picture, this of the little country girl tingling with life in every vein, parroting stately words and squirming out the hour of catechism and instruction. And always I stood when she entered, and opened the door when she passed out. I think, perhaps, this little ceremony nailed the lessons in. And when I sinned with malice aforethought, or sinned as a fish swims through water, then would Miss Rose Elizabeth give me a misdemeanour mark and one

of the Thirty-Nine Articles to learn. I learned them all. I did not like the Articles.

And I could say all the books of the Bible in rotation, and knew about the historical festivals and the legislation of Moses. I learned the Judges and the Kings of Israel in their order, but now I forget all their names except those of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, "who made Israel to sin," and Rehoboam, whom I liked because he was no chicken-hearted king. When the young Israelites came up to his court and said so and so and so, with intent to daunt him, this Rehoboam stiffened his back—shut your eyes and you can see him do it—and he said: "Whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke: my father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions."

And Miss Rose Elizabeth taught me about the Sarum Breviary, the early heresies and schisms, the Fathers of the Church, the history of the Creeds, and about what she called "mediæval developments." I know that the psalms of Asaph and Korah are Elohistic, and that a presbyter of Nestorius, in much confidence, preached a sermon in which he attacked the use of *Theotokos* as applied to the Virgin Mary, and that Nestorius supported this view of his presbyter. This is why I cannot rob a bank, or pick ripe fruit that is good to the eye and calculated to make one wise.

I am in craven bondage to Miss Rose Elizabeth and her mauve-coloured ribbons. She never

taught me morals, you must understand, or any commandments, or anything about "a change of heart"; she only dyed my stripe. I find it is not possible to make this stripe into a plaid or polka-dot.

* * * * *

But I was telling you about the Indians. You must pardon my digressions, for when one goes to the show it is only natural to stand and muse over the sights. The Citizen's Band and a band of Highlanders marched with the Indians in the procession to the Show Fair, where the Indians were to be the guests of the city. Yellow men, black men, and white men who are brown with sunlight, stand on either side and stare at the red men. We are clever people, we British. We not only smote these erstwhile savages hip and thigh, but we make them dance to us. They even don their regalia of war to please our fancy. In fact, we are superlatively clever. We have made them actually love us! God of Mars! this regiment of braves, were they so minded, might throw a ball among us, as at Michilimackinac, and make us into "English broth" before we could wink an eye, much less rally an efficient defence corps.

This is a gathering of the tribes, and there be three chiefs who step lively to the barbaric dissonance of the tom-toms and the skirl of the bagpipes. The unshod hoofs of the ponies make a scuffling noise on the pavement, and the Indian dogs bark. They are lean dogs, like timber-

wolves. What do the dogs eat? It may be that Kichie Manitou throws them down manna from the happy hunting grounds.

Look at this warrior! He carries a club at the top of which is a pointed teat of stone. It is what the Irish call "considerable of a weapon," and nicely calculated to cave in a skull. Once, at an Ontario Show Fair, a man "put the stone" on a boy's head. I heard the sound. It was an osseous crunch, like when an egg-shell is broken.

Here is a warrior whose legs are bare, except for a coating of terra-cotta paint. He has the loin of a cave-dweller. I would not be surprised if even an Indian may have a desire to display his muscular development. It is an ambition that overleaps itself in higher circles than his. His horse is a mean-appearing, ewe-necked runt, but it wears saddle-bags of bead-cloth that will make me dissatisfied till I die. They are too costly to buy, and, being a woman, I may not "square" the brave with whisky. I have heard there are persons who can.

The warrior who follows wears his clothes antithetically; that is to say, the lower part of his body is clothed, but on his torso there is nothing to describe till you get to his waist. One might think he had stepped out of a bas-relief on the Parthenon. His body is painted chrome-yellow, and is decorated with bizarre designs in white. His trousers are of lynx-skin, and his head-dress

of scarlet feathers that look like tresses of flame. Each feather is said to represent a scalp; but who knows ?

One man has three scalps hanging from his belt. He marches along meekly to the tune the pale-face sets him. Tut! he is only a tom-cat who has been eating the family canary. Eastern people, and the folk from over-seas, shudder at scalps in a belt. Their methods are different; but I know! I know! The pale-face stalks his victim just as relentlessly, and takes the scalp just as surely; but he hangs it on his wife's neck in gems of naked flame; or he may hang it on his wall in a Greuze or Millet.

The monotonous iteration of the tom-toms is maddening. If the gods were listening they would strike these young men dead, but the gods leave the young men of the tribes to the evil tenor of their ways. And the youths leave the gods alone. No Indian ever became a priest. It may be that the yoke of celibacy is heavy; but I do not know. A half-caste—one Louis Riel—was educated for the sacred office. You, perhaps, have read how he was hanged.

This discord of the bands, in opposition to the bagpipes and to the tom-toms, excoriate one's ears, but the squaws and papooses in the wagons seem to enjoy it. There are good-looking maidens in the procession. It is a pity these soft-eyed little bundles of femininity must grow up into large, dull squaws. Here is one—slim and supple as a stalk

of corn. She is beautiful, too, in that the one requisite of a beautiful face is light. The devil will throw double-sixes if, by any chance, she comes to live in the city.

Arrived at the Exhibition grounds, the three chiefs exchange courtesies with His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor. Chief Ermine Skin makes the first address, which the interpreter tells us is an expression of the allegiance of his tribe to the Great White Chief over the seas. He expresses objections to the present game laws, which prevent his brethren in the North country from shooting moose at all seasons. Before stepping back, he strips off his buckskin coat, embroidered in many colours and fringed with ropes of ermine, and presents it to the Governor. He is very old, this Chief Ermine Skin, and the story of his hard, hazardous life is writ roughly on his face. He has, in his day, trapped many hundreds of animals, but the stealthy, slow-stepping years have at length trapped the trapper, and he may not shake them off.

Chief Samson also makes an address on the loyalty of the Indians. As a symbol of their obedience, he places in the hands of His Honour a bow and quiver of arrows. The quiver is covered with black fur and bead-work. The presentation is made with a dignity well befitting these ancient lords of Canada. The chief wears a medal on his shoulder. It was given to him by the Pope. Be it said to the credit of the Latin Church that it

recognises that an Indian may be a true gentleman and wear its insignia worthily.

The Governor, through an interpreter, replies to the chiefs and explains that the game-laws are made to protect the moose and to preserve them, so that the chiefs and their children may have moose to shoot always. He welcomes them to the Fair, and greets them on behalf of the Great White Chief over the waters. And His Honour also presents the chiefs with gifts of gold.

But I must tell you other things about our City Fair to which the Indians have come. For four weeks the race-horses have been gathering into it. I have visited the stables nearly every day, to look at the latest arrivals and to watch their being tracked.

At the races, I pick my horse and the Padre takes the field. I almost choke when the horses face the tape for the mile run. I am afraid of a big, lean bay from California, who is a bunch of muscles, nerves, and fire. His jockey, paradoxical as it may sound, rides both recklessly and with reason. He is a master of finesse in his art, and rides without the least regard for the principles of the Red Cross Society. He is obsessed by a spirit, this jockey. I would not be surprised if he were Mercury himself, and that his cap and shoes cover wings.

The Padre thinks this bay will win, but I intend standing by the chestnut. I have been watching him for days, and know he runs as

easily and as precisely as silk runs off a reel. There is a slim, elastic mare in the running, who looks dangerous. She came in only a day ago, from Ontario. No one seems to know what she can do. I cannot describe the race, but the chestnut won. Some day a running race will kill me. The string that lets my breath in and out will break, and then where will I be ?

The " free-for-all " was won by " Leland Onward," a local horse who has carried off many ribbons in America. He is a mighty fine fellow with beauty in every line, from his clean-cut, dainty fetlocks to his nervous, silken ears. He is a " stayer," and has a precise gait and friction-less stride, as if machinery were the motive power.

The hunters are especially good. Last year, my " Goldenrod " carried off the prize. This year, he looks on with the safe sneer of a horse that knows. I use the word " sneer " advisedly for, in spite of its popularity as a simile, no one ever saw or heard a horse laugh.

The best jumps were made by a little grey horse from Calgary. He took the hurdles as easily as a bird flies. It must have been that the applause of the grand stand made the rider over daring, for he did not give the horse either due time or due space, and in one sharp jump he failed. It is sickening to see a rider carried off the field with his head hanging limply.

It will take me a few days to get used to my gains and losses. For this year, until next race

days, the Padre is " tag " when the telephone rings. Also, he has to undertake not to sing in church. On my second race, I won the privileges of the morning *Journal.* I am, however, to do all the carving. (This was on the pacers.) Also, I am to find the clothes-brush and the Padre's hat, rubbers and stick, when he goes out. (The essence of this agreement is placidity.) I have other things to pay, and the Padre refuses to compound. We should quarrel, here and now, if it were not for my natural amiability and unselfishness of disposition.

Next year the Padre will have to pick the winners. I intend taking the field.

* * * * *

Since the races, I have been talking to Malcolm Murray about the horses of the North in the old times. Most of them came from the United States. Jim Campbell seems to have been the leading spirit in horsedom. He owned two : " Shoo Fly " and " Big Enough." The latter was so called because, while small, it was big enough to win anything in sight. Jim was evidently a sport and a humorist. He deserved a more kindly fate ; they hanged him in the republic to the South, because down there it is not considered proper to steal horses. These hangings by Judge Lynch rubbed the bloom off horse-racing in the North, for how was blooded stock to be landed here when there was never a steel rail nearer than fifteen hundred miles ? How, indeed ?

For my part, I think this community owed a debt to Jim such as is owing to other hale-hearted heroes who have been hanged vicariously. But, for a' that and a' that, the communities doubtless pretended the horses came from Hamilton, or Waterloo, Ontario. I'll guarantee they did. Or, perhaps, they designated the act by the well-sounding euphemism of "lifting."

Jim brought in a horse from the States called "Rowdy." It was the fastest horse in Alberta, or which ever had been in Alberta; but this was forty years ago, or over. He sold it to John Adair for the value of four hundred dollars, making also the high-water mark in prices. "Rowdy" was a big chocolate-coloured horse—"a rum 'un to look at," I am told, "but the very dee-vil to go." And "Rowdy" ran a big race at Edmonton —the race that takes pre-eminence of all others in the affections and recollections of the old-timers. Malcolm Murray forgets who owned the other horse, or its name. He does not consult a note-book, but asks a question in Cree of some old Indians who have brought in a bundle of lynx and wolverine pelts to trade with him. Without hesitancy, they answer "Kanowse," for their minds are yet unharmed by books. I am not sure if this was the name of the owner or of the horse, but for convenience we will suppose it was the horse. "Kanowse," needless to say, was also an American importation.

The race was run at Drunken Lake, so-called,

explains my raconteur, because the Indians got their whisky at the Hudson's Bay Fort, and stopped over at the Lake to drink it. The population was not large in those days for, ten years later, we find the census gives the adult population of Edmonton and Fort Saskatchewan as only 275. This did not include the Big Lake Road settlement, now known as St. Albert. Being an older settlement, it probably totalled an equal number of people, mostly Frenchmen.

The Edmonton men backed "Rowdy," while the Big Lake men wagered their money on "Kanowse." Did I say "money?" Habit is strong. There was no such thing half a century ago. At the Fort, the medium of exchange was a beaver-skin. No! On the day of the race each man staked all his available possessions, and as every man was there, it may be computed that exactly half the stuff in northern Alberta changed hands. They were mighty men of valour in those days. Adair, the owner of "Rowdy," made wagers that were considered inconsequential. He was evidently a canny chiel, this son and grandson of Scotch traders who had wed native women. Murray expresses no opinion on the matter, but his colourless, non-committal way of telling it naturally leads to the conclusion that Adair, in putting up his horse and then failing to back it, was a notable example of theoretical wisdom and practical folly. "Rowdy" won out, so each Frenchman went back to his holding and brought

in the stuff he had pledged. In some cases, the journey took several days.

"Rowdy" died at Pakan, seventy-five miles from Edmonton, and you could never guess the rest of the story: that is, you could not if you lived here, for such a thing never before happened to a Northern horse.

But I may as well tell you before I go. *They buried him!*

VIII

The Weather Saint

" What a day
To sun me and do nothing."

It is St. Swithin's Day—that is to say, July 15th. St. Swithin " christened the apples " this morning, so it will rain for forty days hereafter. Being the patron saint of the weather, it is passing strange no churches have been erected to his honour in north-west Canada, where so much is dependent on his good graces.

In the Southern provinces the flowers come in routine—month by month. Beginning with the tender shades, they form a chromatic scale on Nature's palette, but in our short, Northern summers they come in a burst of full-toned glory. We have all the colours at once. The roses are more obtrusive than any of the flowers. Cleopatra, when she received Mark Antony in Cilicia, had the floor covered eighteen inches deep with roses, but the inflorescence of these swooning fields would shame so small an exploit. I love these roses, and I kiss them fair on the mouth, over and over, till almost they blush to crimson.

The butterflies lounge persistently over the roses—jewelled butterflies, sulphur butterflies,

brown butterflies. Our own right pleasant poet, Bliss Carman, looked at them, dipped his pen in dew and nectar, and wrote:

"Ephemera, ravellings of sky,
And shreds of Northern Light."

No one may hope to say more.

The sunflower, who is a prolific wench, grows massed in brilliant patches. She is a saucy baggage, this sunflower—a young woman of the now-look-at-me variety, whose character may be summed up in the fact that she has golden curls and a black eye.

The tall, lissom lilies, red with rapture, bend and curtsy to us. They look as if they ought to break into music. The lily is a beautiful woman whose face is her fortune, or rather her misfortune. She loves much, and loving is frequently identical with suffering. She is too passionate to be virtuous. Balzac was right when he said that in a woman virtue was altogether a matter of temperament. This is only another way of saying that it is easier for some women to be good than others. The same applies to men.

But the red lilies are not numerous except here in this palpitant Northern summer, so that when King Lemuel asked, "Who can find a virtuous woman?" he put what is probably the meanest question ever asked by a man. It is so contemptible that, up to the present, no one has thought it worthy an answer. In asking it, this

old-time king drew a portrait, and wrote his own name beneath for posterity to read.

Because of his question, I have been tracing the history of this Lemuel, but have been unable to find much that is definite. His name means "Dedicated to God." Some commentators claim he was an Arabian chief, living on the borders of Palestine, and was elder brother to Agur, spoken of in Proverbs xxx. 1—the man who said "Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom nor have the knowledge of the holy." After long consideration, I incline to the opinion held by the rabbinical commentators that "Lemuel" was the pen-name of Solomon. This would probably throw light on the remarkable question of this ruler, who never met a woman without her price.

But if the lily be a flaunting bacchante, these lupins at my feet make a contrast by their modesty. They hang their pretty heads shyly, like world-renouncing nuns. They look as if, at any moment, they might fly away and hide.

The word lupin comes from the Latin word for wolf, for the Romans thought the vetch and wild pea preyed on the soil. This, however, is not true. A growth of lupins indicates rich soil, and some farmers crop them as fertilisers. These are what they call "cover crops."

The mosquitoes are thick in this brushwood, and do greatly mortify one's flesh. When I was

young, I used to think he was a very foolish monk who built his monastery in a marsh; but, as I said, I was young. He was no dullard who defined the mosquito as a small insect designed by God to make us think better of the flies.

Lilies of the valley should, by reason of their name, grow in a valley, but, by some queer paradox, I find them on a hill. They are larger and more fragrant than any of the cultured varieties. I draw from their perfume the utmost ecstasy. A German girl brought me a bunch yesterday. She called them "Maiglöckchen"—that is to say, "little May bells."

The honeysuckle, too, has broken her sweet box of perfume on the air. She is particularly attractive to the bees. The bee never seems satisfied. Poets speak of "glutted bees," but I have never seen such.

The feverfew grows wild in all these woodways. It is one of those "manie weeds that being medicinable we call them simples." Long ago, Gerard wrote of the feverfew:

"It is used both in drinks and bound to the wrist, with bay salt and the powder of glasse stamped together, as a most singular experiment against ague."

I know a little old-fashioned garden in Ontario where a little old-fashioned woman grows it as a remedy for jaundice.

I like the pungent odour of the mint. It grows in the grass knee-deep—waist-deep. Intro-

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duced into cheese it should add a savoury taste. The mint flower is a large blossom—almost as large as a tea-cup—and has a *négligé* form that is truly artistic.

The yarrow, too, is a free-flowering plant. Some folk use the little sprouts on the root as a remedy for toothache. Its Latin name, *achillea,* is said to have been given to it because Achilles, in the Trojan War, used it to heal the wounds of the soldiers.

It is bloom-time with the blue bell or wild hyacinth, and with the wild parsnip. There is a tropical width and luxuriance about the parsnip's flapping leaves and umbelliferous flowers that is very pleasing.

Few of the mead flowers grow more riotously than the flame-tipped painter's brush. Could this be the plant before which Moses took off his shoes ? Of a certainty it burns and is not consumed.

Where the roots of a tree have kicked off their brown, earthy blanket, I find a yellow lady's-slipper. This orchid is the emblem of the State of Minnesota. I do not pluck it because it is a rare flower; besides, I have thought for a long time that the plant blooms simply to produce foot-wear for the wheat fairy.

There are hatsful of mushrooms hereabout, and I gather them to bring home. They are cryptogamic plants. The Padre told me "cryptogamy" comes from two Greek words meaning "hidden marriage." Sometimes he misinforms me for the

fun of the thing, but this is probably the true derivation, for the mushrooms are flowerless plants propagated by spores.

The blue-berries are almost ripe. Their ebon branches have a filmy bloom like that of grapes. It is the flush of beauty that represents health within. The saskatoon berries are just fit for eating, and "hang amiable" to the passer-by. Never having tasted ambrosia, I do not know its degree of sweetness; but it must be almost that of saskatoons. Saccharine, ozone-fed, sun-steeped, each berry is a drop of new blood to the veins. I eat and drink them with delight, and know for a surety that to-morrow I shall not die.

The heat is great and wearying, and I rest me in a clump of trees where only an occasional ray of sunlight filters through the green canopy of birch and poplar, for I am very, very tired. There are alien strengths which eat up one's vitality as though it were bread—great causes, and causes that are not great. We are all in bondage to the present imperfect tense; I desire, you desire, they desire. Things of brass and steel and marble live for centuries. It is the fervour of living and the riot of the senses that kill men. It were better to be a Babylonian idol of stone—even Ea, the Fish-God.

I will pray to St. Swithin—he who ought to be the saint of the North—to let me rest and sleep awhile.

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IX

Outlooks and Insights

The world was made for the nomad's feet,
The winding road for pleasure.

—HAMLIN GARLAND.

THE heat on Jasper Avenue this afternoon rises off the pavement like fluid. It is sufficient to melt one's marrow. As we wait in front of a store, we will turn the horses to the east and have the sun at our back. It is better so. Now, we can lean back and watch the colourful life of the city as it goes by. All these people are on review for our delectation. They simply walk up and down to please us. Of course, we make believe we are waiting outside the store for someone, and will drive on in a few minutes, else the paraders might get tired and say:

"Phew! there is nothing in this for us, anyway."

Watch them go by! A masterful, thick-necked business man, with cent. per cent. stamped on every line of his expressive countenance; a girl with a lithe, full throat and half-closed, subtle eyes that hold an evil promise in their dusky depths; a man with failure written in drooping

lines on his shrinking shoulders. What pitiful, unhandsome past lies behind his face I may not say. Thin is he—so thin, that if a cock crew suddenly he would vanish.

Here is a man about town with the suggestion of the Philistine. This is a Hungarian, who bows; she is Anna, our sometimes washerdonna. Last month she knew but two English words: they were "rent" and "missus." Now, she can say "homestead" and "more money."

This next woman who passes is the best informed person in the North, but, being a woman, her knowledge only benefits her as the perfume does a flower. It has no marketable value.

And the faces pass and pass. Some are fixed, and some are expressionless. One makes me stare at its beauty; one is carved for power—but none for peace. Aye! There's the rub! They all seek peace, but do not find it, and I, tented in the seclusion of my rose-coloured sunshade, make believe I am a beneficent physician with balm and cordial for their hurts. As they pass by, I say to them secretly in my heart:

"Learn to hope! Learn to rest! Learn to pray!"

And to one I whisper:

"Death is swallowed up in victory," for his face is as though he had been crucified.

You cannot but see in this Northern girl a distinct type. She has the all-alive face and glowing, beautiful body that only come from

living long hours in the open air. There is about her a bloom much the same as you observe on a rose-petal or a peach—an unspoiled freshness. She is the "neater, sweeter maiden in a cleaner, greener land." In her tastes, she is at once domesticated and pleasure-seeking. With a keen eye for the material side of life, she has no less appreciation for literature and art. She has the habit of looking out for and obtaining information on matters she hears mentioned in the course of conversation, and when she takes her notes it is not on ivory tablets with a programme pencil.

The typical Northern girl is unfamiliar with sham and shoddy, and is essentially genial and self-possessed. How could it be otherwise when she must make bread in the morning, make goal in the afternoon, make hay in the evening, and make good at all times? Being human, she has a few—a very few—foibles and failings, but no vices. The colour of her eyes? I have never noticed. But what odds about their colour when they make you feel friendly with all the world and with her in particular? She is delightful—every hair, every smile, every second. But why paint the rose and gild the lily?

Gentlemen! Hats off! The Northern Girl!

It is a merry, jostling street, this Jasper Avenue at Edmonton. It might have taken its name from the streets of Jasper in heaven, for it is almost half-way there; that is to say, it is nearly three thousand feet above the sea-level. Up and down

its straggling length and fire-engine; pass hearse and van auto and ambulance; truck, trolley and tally-ho; dray and dog-cart; barrow, barouche, and bicycle. They are all hail-fellows-well-met. Presently, we shall have the push-cart of the pea-nut man, the royal mail-coach in flaming red, and the prison-van in sombre black. It is conceivable, too, that we shall have airships, and make wedding trips to the home of the Eskimo.

Jasper Avenue is a road hard in asphalt and stone, and deep-gutted with iron tubes. Pray put a pin in this, for we are as proud of the pavement as if it were really chrysolite or jacinth. Only three years ago it was a morass of mud—a sweet-sour road, over which horses strained and tugged, and men swore in terms of uncompromising blasphemy. It is an old, old road. We know that men have used it for over a hundred years, and it is highly probable it was a trail for the Indians a century or two before.

"We shall have airships, and make wedding trips to the home of the Eskimos."

Open Trails

Until the white traders came, it was a crawling path that snaked with the curves of the river even as it does to-day. A hundred years ago it was beaten hard by moccasins, those "shoes of silence" that are more gloves than shoes. It must have been an Indian trail even longer ago, for the Indians would make camp on high ground close to the river. Besides, it is likely that in the summer season water covered the flats between Jasper Avenue and the Saskatchewan where, nowadays, we play golf and speed horses. But the Crees and Ojibways did not call the river the Saskatchewan. Our name is a corruption of their words *Ke-sis-kat-je-wun*, which mean "a rapid current."

Even more than a hundred years ago the North-West Fur Traders had a post here which they called Fort des Prairies, and sometimes Hughes Fort. Later, it was Fort Augustus. And one hundred and four years ago, there came over the seas and by way of Hudson Bay, some canny, self-satisfied Scotchmen, who built another trading post at one side of this trail. They set it about with palisades, bastions, and brass guns, and they called themselves, "The Company's Gentlemen."

This Hudson's Bay post—known now as Fort Edmonton—is, nevertheless, an upstart post, one of mushroomic growth, because one hundred and forty years previously this same Honourable Company of Gentlemen Adventurers had been trading "down north" into the fur hinterland.

Those must have been stirring days on Jasper Avenue, when the untutored red men brought their priceless peltry to barter at the rival forts.

Did I say "priceless?" Do not misunderstand me. The word refers solely to the European market. I have heard tell that the Scotch gather figs off thistles. It must be true because they use them to buy furs from the Indians—a fig for a mink, two figs for a marten, and as many as ten figs for a silver fox. But I digress.

The vehicles on Jasper Avenue up to the middle of the nineteenth century were the sledge, the travois, and the cariole. The first was drawn by dogs, the second by ponies, and the third by dogs or ponies. In the sledge they carried furs; on the travois, food or a baby; in the cariole, the factor or some other of the adventuring gentlemen. They may, from time to time, have shifted loads and motive powers, but, as nearly as I can make out, this was the way of it.

About the middle of the nineteenth century, the Red River cart appeared on Jasper Avenue. It was hauled by oxen. Being built without so much as a scrap of iron, it creaked horribly. By some strange law of attraction, one of these carts still holds together on the Stoney Plain Indian Reserve, and the wheel of another lies in a heap of rubbish behind old Fort Edmonton. It was made by hand, and has a ponderous axletree. All the supplies for the district were hauled in these carts from Winnipeg, a distance of twelve hundred

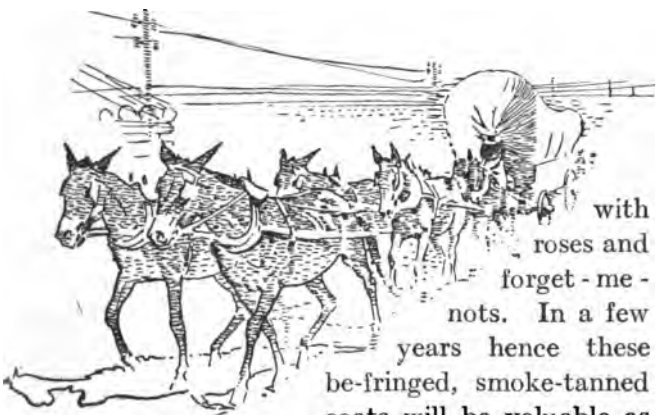
miles. Later, the prairie schooners made their appearance on the Avenue. They came in from the Canadian territories farther south, or from the United States, bringing immigrants in search of homesteads.

The advent of the railways has changed all this, although in the later winter one sees, not infrequently, a caboose on a sled, heading for the Peace River district, or for some point up north. This is a comfortable way of travelling, and on arriving at his claim the homesteader shifts the caboose to the ground and uses it for a house. In the summer he may add a log kitchen to it—or, again, he may not.

One of the present-day features of Jasper Avenue is the number of riders. Men and women ride in from ranches, from reserves, from homesteads, from mines, from construction camps—from the Lord only knows where. And if a man is only walking, still he wears riding leggings. This may be that he has been riding, or is going to ride, or would like to ride. I am, of course, aware that a youth frequently dons leggings to hide uncreased trousers, or trousers that are frayed. In the security of his leggings he peacocks up and down the Avenue, slapping his leg with a riding-crop while, with the reasoning of the elemental male, he thinks the girls are deceived by his little ruse. It is, I may explain, necessary that a man appear at his very best in a city where there are at least ten men to every woman. But, all said,

the ruse does him credit, for the youth who can contemplate his fringed trousers with equanimity is wholly lacking in a sense of values. Moreover, leathers are not unbecoming to a well-turned leg.

To the philosophic and stable mind it seems passing strange that while a man resents fringe on his trousers, he sometimes affects it on his coat. The " bull whacker " across the way has his moose-hide coat fringed profusely, and also it is embroidered



" Later, the prairie schooners made their appearance."

with roses and forget-me-nots. In a few years hence these be-fringed, smoke-tanned coats will be valuable as relics of ranching days; but, at present, no one needs or heeds them. This " bull-whacker " is driving " beef on the hoof " to the packing plant. The steers want to go to all points of the compass but to the right one. Probably this is why they are called " steers." But the man knows how to handle his involuntary immigrants. He is a master cow-puncher, this fellow, a graduate of the bovine curriculum. Some-

one has said a good bull-fighter must have a weak head and a strong back. This dictum is smart and epigrammatical, but wholly untrue. Achilles had a heel and Samson had locks, but, Lord of Men and Beasts, have mercy on that cow-puncher who has one weak atom anywhere between his leather hat and his leather shoes!

There are many women who ride on this street. Most of them ride astride, because it is not pleasant or, for that matter, safe for a woman to be hooked to the side of a horse as if she were a bundle of clothes on a peg. The gentlemen from England hide their faces as the equestriennes go by; but I know they peep through their fingers.

There are few, if any, streets in Canada where one sees so many dapper thoroughbreds and mettlesome, well-finished horses as on Jasper Avenue. There are proud-stepping hackneys imported from England; round-barrelled, ribbed-up hunters from Ireland, and rangy, well-matched carriage teams from Ontario and the United States. Nearly all the good horses that are brought into the province come up to the capital for a market, as do, likewise, nearly all the ewe-necked, ugly-dispositioned runts. A few days ago, a large, ruddy man, from that indefinite region known as "down the line," offered to sell me a horse which any woman could drive. Not wanting a horse answering the description, I sent him away. It was a vast untruth the man told, for I see the horse nearly every time I go out. He is

a most evil equine, and has a face like a rocking horse. He is a jibber. He acts up, and acts down. He does it manfully. After all, there may be some truth and some sense in what the man said, for it does take a woman to coax a jibber. When a man gets a horse that he thinks a fast proposition—everything in the North is a "proposition," from a cayuse to a church—he puts a towel under its back-band and rubber-shoes on its feet, and drives it up and down the Avenue with an eye for possible purchasers. Sometimes, he puts a "For Sale" notice on the horse, and then his jaunt is one round of pleasure. He is a specious hucksterer, this horse dealer, and his descriptions, affirmations, and denials interest me like a story. If I were reviewing his yarn for Messieurs the Publishers, falling into the usual jargon, I would probably say:

"There is a vast amount of information and entertainment to be derived from the perusal of this well-imagined, well-constructed, well-sustained story. The author is at once a realist and a romancist. His mental powers are both analytic and synthetic. His story is marked by a facility of expression and picturesqueness of language. Words are his light and active servants, and the reader surrenders unconditionally."

This is what I would say, and it would be no dream either. But if I did, these Northern folk would wink, smile knowingly, and look superior. They might even say, "the figment of her pig-

ment," as they do when literary folk come this way and write anything about the people of the country not already recorded in the Blue books or in the Board of Trade literature.

If you are a visiting journalist and see romance in the fur trade, colour in the sky, or in the life of the pioneer, atmosphere either on the hills, or atmosphere such as one senses from environment, you must not perpetuate it on paper. On your life, you must not. Every Northman believes that unless you have lived at least a decade in the country you cannot write as one having authority. Full surely they are mistaken, for it is only the new-comer who is able to write effectively. He sees as a feature what the Northerners do not even notice, because it is their habit, their breath, their life. Even Moses wist not that his face shone, but some chronicler of old observed the peculiarity and wrote it down. There was a journalist for you.

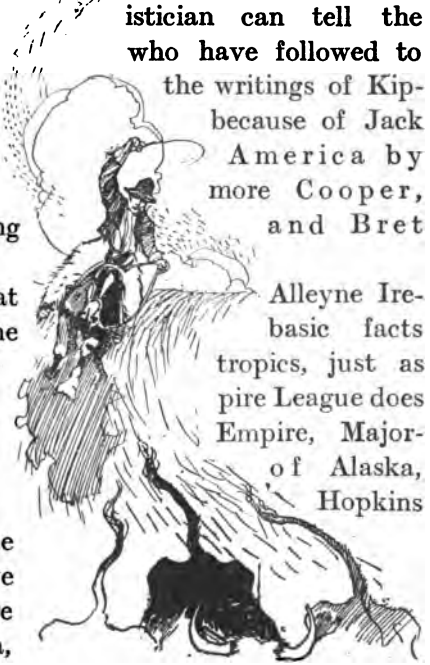
The Egypt of the Pharaohs did great things. She boasted herself to be the granary of the world, even as we claim to be the granary of the Empire, but in this day we are not particularly concerned as to the number of bushels she produced nor as to how she marketed them. Our attention is riveted on those records which tell how she lived and loved and what she looked like —her colour, so to say. That writer, then, who observes and holds this down, who sees more than he is shown, who states a fact only that he

may tell its meaning, who senses the life of the people rather than photographs it, he is the writer who most benefits his country and all countries. His work passes into permanent literature.

People do not emigrate because they read Blue books. Comparatively few either see or read them. Men are caught and lured by colour, atmosphere, the hidden, the desire for the new, the ache for adventure, the something behind the hills.

Which statistician can tell the number of men who have followed to India because of the writings of Kipling, to Alaska because of Jack London, to America by reason of Fenimore Cooper, Washington Irving and Bret Harte?

It is true that Alleyne Ireland gives the basic facts of life in the tropics, just as the United Empire League does of the British Empire, Major-General Greeley of Alaska, and J. Castell Hopkins of Canada, but the writings of Olive Schreiner did more for South Africa, and Louis Becke



"The riot and revel of the rush across the prairie."

for the South Sea Islands, than all the facts and figures the economists and publicists can possibly pile up in their lifetime.

Young men who go ranching have not been reading the returns as to the amount of beef grown on, or marketed from, the prairies — not they! Ninety-nine out of a hundred have been reading Emerson Hough, Edgar Bronson, and O. Henry. The writer sees in the round-up a glowing crusade in which no man may hold his own without skill, nerve, and grit; in the stampede, he sees horn-breadth escapes; in the riot and revel of the rush across the prairie, he feels the pulse of the horse that responds to every heart-beat of the rider. He tells of it, and the young men rise up and follow. They would test their manhood on a new and bloodless battle-field. It is the spirit moving on the face of the waters.

It is, I repeat it, absurd for Northern folk to nod and wink at colourful pictures of themselves and of their land. I, for one, never do so. It is a dangerous pastime. Dionysius, a Sicilian tyrant, put Antiphon to death because he made light of his compositions.

It is better to allow an author full scope to say what he sees either through his naked eye, or through smoked glasses, goggles, a lorgnette, or whatsoever visual adjunct he may affect. It may turn out a fad, a philosophy, or a folk-song; but

what odds, so long as the writer is true to what he personally sees ?

* * * * *

Zaccheus climbed a tree to see the sights. I climbed the axletrees. Here is where I come down.

X

A Monastery Garden

And I think that saving a little child,
And bringing it to its own,
Is a dern sight better business
Than loafing around a throne.
—COLONEL JOHN HAY.

IT is a pleasant road from Edmonton to St. Albert. The latter is a French village, and we pronounce it after the manner of the French. Soon, when the electric road connects them, St. Albert will be a suburb of Edmonton. Already the lots on the river and lake are being divided and sold as "desirable building sites." This means that the old French bourg—for fifty years spells old-age in this Northern morning-world—will be modernised out of its individuality. Presently schismatics will build chapels on the corner lots, and it is conceivable that the Salvation Army will have their barracks over against the convent. But, after all, the Salvation Army is probably of Roman Catholic origin. I have no doubt General Booth took the name and idea of the Army from a corps founded in Toulouse in 1216, by Dominic, a Spanish nobleman, which corps was called "Christ's

Militia." The gentlemen of the Militia wore a handsome court dress, and a sword which they were sworn to use against heretics. Their wives became members also, and were attired in uniforms of black and white.

I said this road was a pleasant one, and I said it advisedly. The fields on either side are yellow to the harvest. Tossed by warm, vagrant breezes, the barley makes soft, hushed noises, like the sea as it laps the shore. In truth, there is a strong similarity between fields of grain and large bodies of water. The terms which apply to one may be properly applied to the other. A Greek poet described the sea as a " countless smile." In our language, no other words could more aptly set forth a field of ripe grain caressed by a chinook wind.

Wave upon wave of sunflowers roll through the lush meadowlands like drifts of gold. I greed over yellow flowers and yellow grain. One may pirate gladness and vitality from them.

The blue-berries are ripe, and so are the saskatoons. They dye my fingers to a rich henna. My fellow-farer calls me an odalisque, for she has been a physician to an Oriental court, and says odalisques in the harem stain their fingers to this identical shade. And also this physician says " Brother " to the crows, for it is well-known in the East that to neglect this is to invite dire misfortune. I can quite believe anything about the crows: they are swart demons. It has always

been my opinion that the souls of bad men turn into crows and, as such, subsist on carrion.

This St. Albert Road used to be called the Big Lake Road, but thirty years ago the name was changed. Some of the first settlers still affect the old appellation, probably to impress us with a sense of guilty newness; and it does impress us. I intend adopting these tactics myself when I am an old-timer.

There are few houses on the road, for French folk seem to be more gregarious than British and flow over to the villages. To my way of thinking, the great pleasure of country life is in having no neighbours. Why should I tolerate neighbours when I cannot tolerate myself? And I may as well acknowledge, at this point, that, so far as my neighbours are concerned, the feeling is reciprocal. I notice my neighbours rarely invite me to tea, but this is not to be expected when they can look from their back windows and see me painting the vehicles. I paint a great deal. In truth, painting is my master-passion. I like the hearty "slap, slap" of the fat brush on the wood. I also polish the brass on the harness and, sometimes, I bandage the horses' legs and give them a special polish when the stableman's other occupations are too numerous and too important—a contingency that happens not infrequently with a hotel bar in the neighbourhood. No! I may deceive the people several blocks away, but my neighbours are better posted. They can readily

see that I am " no lady," and ought to be ashamed of myself. Now, in the country, without neighbours, I could sin against the law of the usual with impunity. I could stand on the housetop and crow if I wanted to, and I would surely want to. The town is a very good place for an occasional roost, but it is better far to build one's nest in the country.

But here, at last, is St. Albert! Stay awhile on this hill and seize its features. It is so very French that you almost expect to see the houses shrug their shoulders. On the hill opposite stand the orphanage, the convent, the seminary, the old, log church—the oldest church in the North—and the basement of the new cathedral. On the right the hill is flanked by the cemetery, the bishop's house, and the long, low farm buildings that are landlocked by seas of grain. The roofs are red and many-gabled. Also they slant sharply, as roofs should in a province where there are five months of snow. The buildings have a friendly look, and wave us a tempting invitation to ride thither. In the ravine the Sturgeon River runs down to the lake. I should have said that it loiters down, for it is a well-behaved, leisurely stream, and knows enough to keep in harmony with its surroundings. In the foreground stands the village—a cluster of houses, a store or two, and a hotel; and there is a mill, too. It is not a tall, tin, thin affair such as the word " mill " conjures up to the mind's eye. On the contrary,

it is built solidly of red bricks, for its builders had plenty of time, and labour was cheap in pre-railroad days. It sings the identical song the old windmills used to sing at Montmartre. Listen! and you may hear it:

"Bring in, bring in your yellow grain
And I will give you white:
Wide is my hopper for your grist,
My mill-stones you may trust;
Bring in your harvest when you list,
And I will give you dust."

In this village there are no big advertisement boards, with pendent rags of paper, to disfigure these scenes. The nasturtiums have waved their flame to every doorstep, and on every fence sweet peas rise and fall in fountains of flowers. The place has a delicate, yet homely, grace and, as we surrender our horses to François, with his eternal bowings and prattling *patois*, we feel ourselves over in France or, at the very least, down in old Quebec.

The dinner is Canadian, but the waitress is French.

"Did madame order wine?"

"No! the mesdames will have a bottle of ale."

And the mesdames have a clear soup and steak of sea-salmon, plump chops with new potatoes and young peas, a berry-pie heaped high with stiffened cream—this, and a yellow-fleshed, succulent, altogether ravishing, melon. And also they

have coffee that is strong and sweet, and little cakes, for the mesdames have appetites on edge like the east wind when it blows in off the empty plains.

The garden of the monastery at St. Albert is a place of rest and great peace—of heart-healing peace that only the kind leaves can give. The intrusive birch and fussy poplar are kept in the background, and the maples hold the place of honour. They are no striplings either, but old and gnarled and twisty. They are family-trees in that they stand for age, culture, and dignity.

The perfume of the garden is so tremulous that it comes to me almost like a laugh. Mignonette, wallflowers, pansies, and petunias grow in well-ordered masses, and geraniums make blurs of blood against the whitened border stones. I like the geraniums best: they seem to call me by name.

The feet of the marble Madonna are half-hidden in a fecundity of blossoms. It is wholly fitting that the Madonna should preside over these play-gardens where most of the bairnies are motherless. In the ages that are to come it is possible that bloodless, long-fingered, weak-eyed scientists may, with wonder, dig Madonnas out of the stale earth that has been laid fallow by blood and squalor and tears, just as to-day, in Babylon, they dig up Istar, the goddess of childbirth. It may be so; but that for which the statue stands is eternal, and will ever be worshipped, mayhap, under some other name, and with a slightly different form.

There are many children playing in these gardens, for the buildings accommodate two hundred and fifty. The sisters have an industrial school where orphans and Indian children are cared for. They have also a monastery for girls and young boys. In some orphanages the children lose their individuality and become as much alike as clay images that have been baked in a common mould. In time they degenerate into shrewd-faced, lying sneaks—shamblers, skulkers, automatons, without any kind of a bone but a wish-bone. It is different here. She who runs may read the frank, play-free attitude of the children. I do homage to these wise women of the North. For a certainty they have seen the star.

Before the days of the stock-exchange, men conceived of an elysium the entrance of which was of jasper and gold and precious stones, a place where they would do no work and eat twelve manner of fruits. It would not be surprising ultimately to find that the entrance to heaven is by way of a garden in which there are little children playing. Indeed, I think it is sure to be.

Serving under the Madonna, there are two nuns in the garden. One of them is a rarely handsome colleen. Her laugh gives me a distinct sensation. It is guileless, and seems to bubble up like that of a child. By some subtle process of the mind, we have come to associate a merry heart with cap and bells, and a sad one with coif and cross. It is a division made by young people and people

who are shallow. I know a shining sea that has treacherous undercurrents. Also, I know a sea that is storm-tossed and—— But I was telling about the nuns. The second one is an older woman, tall and well-formed. She has heavy-lidded, long-lashed eyes, and always they are downcast. Her face is pale; her lips are scarlet, but they droop at the corners. The effect of the whole is pathetic.

The wicked spirit ever at my left ear nudges me and whispers:

"Neurotic type! Loves God instead of man!"

"Tut, tut, woman!" argues the wholesome spirit in my right ear. "It is wiser to love God than man. Look at her only for the stigmata."

But her face troubles me. It is in a transitional state, and records a struggle. In the years to come, when time has quenched the flame of her strong, unquiet soul, she will have a bi-sexual face such as befits virgins under vows; that is to say, a face which combines a woman's delicacy with a man's strength.

There is a design painted on nearly every window pane in the monastery. No, madam! you must guess once more. It is not a cross and the lilies of France. It is a cross and maple leaves. And why not? The French were "Canadians" when the British were "Americans." They owned and nurtured the maple leaf long before the British laid covetous claws upon the heights of Quebec. And on the black-boards in the schoolrooms the sisters have drawn maps of

the world, and they have marked the British possessions red. I told you these were the wise women of the North.

The melodeon—mind you, not the six-octave, C scale, eleven-stop grand organ with knee-swell, guaranteed for five years, *but the melodeon*—has been full fifty years in use. I cannot say whether it was brought in from the Old World by way of the Hudson Bay, or overland from Upper Canada; but I know it still makes a satisfactory accompaniment for singing.

We visit the chapel, the refectory, and the sitting-rooms. In the kitchen everything is distressingly clean, and the vessels shine like suns and moons. The stock pot is almost as large as a tub, and it simmers out savoury fumes that give fair promise for supper. The girls' dormitory is fitted with a shrine. I am not sure that it is a shrine; it may be a station, or an altar, but it pertains to the Virgin and is devotional in character.

I wish I were a little girl that I might be tucked away o' nights in a white cot with the good Mary to guard me from harm. I wouldn't know I was tired and worldly and disillusioned. I wouldn't suspect that I am only a mammal with a mind—a common machine which will stop when something breaks—and that there is no rest that remaineth.

The sister who is our escort is one of the teachers. She tells us she was reared in "Mon'real."

She is accomplished, clever, and discreet. Her face has a certain ivory delicacy of colouring probably due to her indoor duties. When she does not understand me she says, "Please?"—meaning I am to repeat the question. She has no time to play at John-o'-Dreams, for there are but twenty-five sisters in charge of the establishment. When I express my surprise at the smallness of the staff, she says, "Yes, we are overcharged." I like the word better than "over-worked." It does not imply a complaint but, contrariwise, a sense of the dignity and importance of the work. I would like to lay this word on the Labour Union table for respectful consideration. In the school nursery one inevitably makes the same deduction—that the needful work is the holy work. She only is a drudge or underling who has the mind of one.

"She can cast a spell over a Red Indian baby whenever she wants to."

It is easy to see that the sister in charge of the babies has kept a child's heart through a woman's life. She can cast a spell over a Red Indian baby whenever she wants

to. A brown, dimpled boy, with silky rings of hair, has fallen asleep on her lap. It is well with the child. As she lays the mannikin down, it occurs to us that baby lingo has a peculiarly winsome sound when it comes from the lips of a bachelor maid in the uniform of a nun. It was worth while coming out to hear. These women have no rod or dark, penal room such as we find in institutions presided over by the sterner sex. A poet once said, "God in the garden laughed outright." I do not know his name or the rest of the poem, but I often wonder why God laughed. Sometimes, I think it must have been about the proverb, "Spare the rod and spoil the child."

At times, during the last year, there have been over two hundred children in this institution, and they increase and increase and one may not turn them away. What is to be done? It would seem like sound economy for our Government to enlarge their grants to these and kindred institutions which give the youngsters a chance, for this course would mean a distinct saving in the erection of prisons, asylums, gallows, and other of the modern conveniences of civilisation. If the money spent in the North on penology were turned into heading off boys from crime, we could get along without the police except as a necessary convoy for befoozled old gentlemen who become seized with a desire to "shoo" electric-cars off the roads in the middle of the night.

We have a chat with some of the lads who are changing their shoes before going to milk. One vain cock-robin throws out his little chest and says:

"No! I *never* milk. I *hate* milking."

"He probably feeds the calves," says the Doctor. "Boys are such unregenerate snobs."

This system of exercise is a good one. Instead of putting college men to break each other's necks and knee-caps in the playful pleasantry known as Rugby, it might be just as well to engage their energies in hoisting hay, milking cows, and spading sod. It would keep their muscles hard and their hearts soft.

Some day, when the cathedral of St. Albert gets higher than the basement—that is, when the basement is called a crypt—it will be thought worthy of long descriptive articles; but candour compels the confession that I like it better as a basement. In this lowly estate it has an individuality, and is more truly representative of the people. When it is finished, they will belong to the Cathedral, but now the cathedral belongs to them. They have woven the carpets themselves from the rags discarded by the orphans and from the fawn-coloured uniforms of the nuns, to say nothing of the old clo' belonging to the inhabitants of the parish. And the carpets are soft, and even woo the feet of Protestants. I know this for a certainty.

There are no priests in the church when we

enter. "Bernard, the Bad," whispers the Doctor, fearsomely, "says you should only go to church when the preacher is not there." But there are other things here—statues of God and His mother; a fire that burns always before a small door that no one might be so bold as to push open; candles that are tall as I am tall; angels with heads down-bowed; and, behind the altar, a prodigious sarcophagus of granite that holds the good Bishop Grandin, the like of whom there seldom was.

In the Bishop's grounds Pierre is gardening or, rather, he is pottering about lifting a pea-vine, smelling a flower, setting up a stake, pinching off a leaf, patting a prime squash, or giving the quietus to a marauding bug. He is a fine old fellow, this Pierre, with a certain gentle manner only acquired by long years of gardening. Sometimes fishermen acquire it. We will all be gentle when we are more civilised. These plots and patches declare Pierre to be well versed in garden lore. It takes an old Frenchman to grow cabbages. Others may attempt the art and may be fairly successful, but only a man who calls a cabbage-head *une pomme de chou* can hope to attain perfection.

There are no roses in this Northern garden. Pierre shrugs his shoulders and says roses and cabbages are much alike. The pot-herbs are planted in narrow ribbons that have an aromatic tang. Who would want to live, physically or mentally, without sage, thyme, and parsley?

The scarlet-runners are tied to the walls, and

are prim and precise as if they were done in curl-papers. I always call them "tongue-flowers" because—well, because they are scarlet-runners and must be tied to stop their wagging. So are the pea plants tied up, for they, also, are aimless and errant invertebrates, given to much blundering.

Ah! If we only had an all-wise, all-puissant human gardener who knew about pollination, tubers, tilth, underground shoots, and cross-breeding, he could stiffen weak climbers, graft plums on sand-cherries, prune, spray, and fumigate, eliminate mental burs and moral thistles, and train us all into shapely growths—even, were he so minded, into pyramids, upright cordons, and espaliers. His gardening would serve to keep the balance true, for, in truth, 'tis a mad world, my masters!

The bells in the grove near by are ringing for evensong. A grove of trees makes a proper setting for bells—if you must have bells. For my part, I can never see why pleasure requires alcohol, or religion bells. I expected you would differ, for mine is a flat-wash view of pleasure and religion—the irrational prejudice of a ready caviller.

In the cemetery, a straight-backed young priest is saying prayers for the dead. As he passes from grave to grave, my eyes pass too, for this devotee has a fighter's build, and would pass for a drill-sergeant.

Quaint old Jeremy Taylor said it was well for the living to knock at the gates of the grave.

But what can the dead tell us except that they rest ?

I am glad the Doctor has left me here alone, for I may sit by the graves of these women and ask them foolish questions.

In one plot, eight women sleep close together under a coverlid of green. The dead do not need air. An old legend says that when the grass grows green over the dead, they sigh, because it is the time of love. But these be holy sisters, and they may not so much as dream of lovers.

One is nineteen and a day. You may read it on the black, wooden cross. Dear little girl ! Did it hurt to die ?

Tell me, is it true that wounds never ache any more in the Land of Heart's Desire ?

And I have heard tell that, in heaven, hands never grope in the darkness nor throats parch for fresh springs.

Is it true that women are quit of the sun, and that their eyes never burn, and that they sleep without surcease ?

Tell me——

But my little girl may not say, for she is dead and her eyes are clay-stopped and her heart is clay-cold.

God pity us all ! Pity us all !

XI

Days Off

I lay me down with a haunting note,
That no man sang and no man wrote;
And when I rise at the break of day,
Dawn sings the whole of the captured lay.
—ELIZABETH GIBSON.

I COULD not sleep because the man in the berth across the aisle kept talking to himself. The burden of his conversation was:

"I'm broke. Yes, siree; I'm broke!"

I fancy he meant "strapped," for no one is ever broke—at least, not for long—in the Canadian North-West. Here a man does not necessarily lie as he makes his bed. When he loses his reputation he at once gets another. The same with his fortune. Nevertheless, this fellow's ejaculations were greatly annoying, and kept me awake. That is why I sat up and watched the sun rise over the prairie. The colour ascended in a scale till it glowed like the core of a furnace. The beauty of it almost hurt. I said my prayers to the sun. I prayed to him that the dawn might ever rest on this land; but I dare not tell this to anyone but you.

For miles and miles we pass over the great reach of the plains which men call the prairie—

the land where nothing meets but the four winds. It is a featureless, empty world that runs away into the sky in whatever direction you look. Nowhere else, but on the sea, can one grasp the idea of boundless space. Nothing passes but the clouds; and yet they tell me this prairie winds a glamour—a strange, unaccountable witchery—about the heart that, travel where he may, no Westerner ever forgets or wishes to forget. Its weird sounds, and still more weird silences, become a part of his soul.

The only features on the prairie are the telegraph poles—those tall, gaunt grenadiers whose fidelity and strength are unsung. With rigid arms outstretched, they listen to the swift words on the vibrant wires. What do the wires carry? Grave messages of hate and love; vast news from near and far of storm and fire and flood; tidings of a king dead and a peasant born; tidings of men who have lost and men who have won. To-morrow I shall read in the papers the messages to which the poles have been listening.

I was mistaken when I said there was no feature but the poles. There are the criss-crossed trails of the buffalo, for this was the old stamping-ground of the herds. They might have been marked out by the meanderings of a drunken man; but the plough is rapidly obliterating their trails, and the new lines are furrows that run straight.

* * * * *

I decided to call this trip a honeymoon. One

has to be married years and years to know how to take a honeymoon—that is, to play properly at first man and first woman. First honeymoons are a disillusionment and a weariness to the soul. How can two souls with not a single thought walk

"The land where nothing meets but the four winds."

together ? How, indeed ? Instead of honeymooning, it is better for a man to keep on at his work and for a woman to put her house in order. A honeymoon should only be taken after people have thoroughly adapted themselves to each others' vagaries. John Gilpin's wife seems to have been

a sensible body in this respect. You will remember how she said to Gilpin :

> *" Though wedded we have been*
> *These ten tedious years, yet we*
> *No holiday have seen."*

Still, the world moves and people in these days have more wisdom than of old, for the Hebrew honeymoon used to last a whole year. The law provided that when a man took a new wife, he should not go out to battle, neither should he be charged with any business, but should be free at home for twelve months " to cheer the wife he hath taken."

When I told the Padre this was to be a honeymoon, he remarked with an invincible insouciance that it was only a harvest moon. There was no sense in my feeling snubbed, for he was merely thinking of the grain he is going to market in Saskatchewan. There is something so solid and workaday about the Padre. Once he said the honeymoon was so-called because it had to be compared with the months that followed, wherein you get the comb and the wax.

* * * * *

As one travels down country, league after league, one must, perforce, chuckle at the wiseacres who write reams on the imminent starvation that awaits the world, and of how the wheat supply will be wholly inadequate for the demand of the nations. Why, here in the North, we could almost

feed the world if put to it. Only three per centum of the land is under cultivation and, last year, the total yield in cereals was three-hundred million bushels—at least, I read it was. It must be borne in mind, too, that the word "cultivation" in this country only means a surface scratching of the soil; our farmers are the most careless and thriftless in the world. If you do not believe it, cast your eye, my dear sir, over these slovenly stooks of wheat standing out on the 15th of October. And look, I pray you, at these heaps and heaps of hay that have been cut and raked but never hauled in. Look, too, at these self-binders standing in the field where the last swathe was cut. They will stand here until next spring, till the gang-ploughs push them out of the way and up on to the headlands—the wasteful headlands that are quite as wide as any southern highway.

He is a queer fellow, this newly-arrived homesteader. His cattle are fat from the lush grass, and his horses are lean from sod-breaking and because of poor stabling. He piles up a few logs and splashes mud between the interstices. He piles on sods for a roof, or some oat-straw, and calls the whole a stable. He never moves the manure pile—not on your life! When the door will no longer open, he builds a new stable. He has no time or lumber to build an implement shed, and you may readily see that his ill-proportioned house is an after consideration.

Sometimes the pioneer farmer works with oxen

instead of horses and, on the whole, this is a good plan, because the oxen will eat coarse fodder and are not so apt to succumb in unfavourable circumstances. It must always be remembered, too, that the end of the ox is beef or, if you will have it so, gutta-percha.

It is true these pioneers have not much ready money either in their pockets or in the bank, and that their crops are eaten up in paying for machinery, wagons, live-stock, and hardware. But all this gear means capital; it is not a sinking-fund either, for every furrow they make in the soil means increased earning power.

At almost every steading the men are threshing, so that the song of the machine is incessant. I notice that it sings in three semi-tones. I try to fit words to them, but the right ones refuse to come. The homesteaders have, too, an untenable song they sing merely to blow their ungracious dust in the eyes of the Government. It is said to have had its origin in Texas. Here it is:

"My house is built of natural sod,
Its walls are erected according to hod,
The roof has no pitch, but is level and plain;
I always get wet if it happens to rain.

"How happy am I on my Government claim,
I've nothing to lose, I've nothing to gain,
I've nothing to eat, I've nothing to wear—
From nothing to nothing is very hard fare."

We had to wait at Warman Junction. It is a disappointing little place with about fifty

inhabitants — a temporary resting-place for lost souls.

The time hung horribly, so we wandered out across the prairie to where a dozen little pigs were feeding from a trough. The Padre drew a wry face, but merely observed that the trough was the only place where heads always win. I like pigs, though; there is something so discreet about them. William J. Long, Thompson Seton, and Charles G. D. Roberts have told us the innermost psychology of the deer, partridge, goat, wolf, and fox; we would respectfully ask them to tell us what the pig thinks about. The pig's pen has not received its due meed from the pen of the naturalist. Nor is the subject by any means an unworthy one. As a matter of fact, the Turks have always held that man is only the younger brother of swine.

On the way back, the Padre killed a snake. I prayed him to let it go, but he would not. He loses his self-respect if a snake gets away head-whole. The seed of the woman, he contends, should crush the head of the serpent. I argue that among the Hindus serpents

"The only place where heads always win."

were divine animals, and emblematic of eternity. Moreover, there was a race of serpents known as Nagas, and they were half gods and half men.

"Did you say among the Hindus?" asked this man creature; but he did not lift his heel from the snake's head. The poor beastie wriggled this way and that like an interrogation mark gone crazy.

"She was an observing little girl," remarked the Padre, "who described the first snake she saw as nothing with a tail to it."

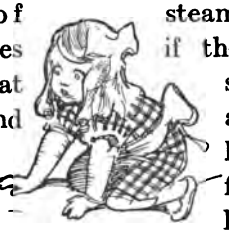
I do not know why men have such an abhorrence of snakes. Many snakes are harmless. I used to think it was because of the serpent's pranks in Eden, but men do not love Eve the less for her part therein. Is it because the snake is condemned to eat dust all the days of its life? But the snake does nothing of the kind. I am still seeking light.

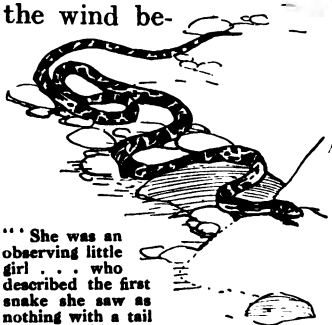
On the way to Prince Albert we again passed the Saskatchewan River. It sprawls its enormous length all over this country in curves that are the despair of railway companies and municipal bridge-builders. Still, the artists appreciate it, for the line of beauty is serpentine.

At night, all the prairie is lit by the lurid glare of burning straw-stacks. These be bonfires lighted in honour of the goddess Ceres, to whom the farmers crinkle their knees. The burning of refuse to the deities has the sanction of very ancient

usage. Indeed, Isaiah tells of a certain Jewish fellow who made refuse into a deity: "He roasteth roast," says the chronicler, "and is satisfied; yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire: *And the residue thereof he maketh a god.*"

Except making a balloon ascent, there is nothing gives one's blood so heavenly a shiver as a ride on the engine. It carries the brain in a whirl and transfixes every sensory nerve. Hitherto, I have thought of an engine as a thing of smoke, grease, and iron. I know now that it has a sensate soul—that it suffers, does evil, and rejoices, even as a strong man, to run a race. There be misguided folk who sit in railway coaches and talk of "the practical prose of steam," but the engineer, who watches if the track be clear, he knows that steam is an epic, and a drama, and a lyric in one. The engine is his mighty steed, and in her flight leaves the wind behind. To the engineer she gives her will, and to her he gives his strength. See how she answers to his hand! Yes, to his slightest touch! I have it — she neck-reins! There is a mighty breathing in her great





"'She was an observing little girl . . . who described the first snake she saw as nothing with a tail to it.'"

chest. Through her black arteries, the pulsing, seething steam carries strength to her long, strong sinews. Her voice is resonant, full and deep; in truth, hers is a lordly note. In the little sod-roofed shack across the plains, mayhap, a man turns on his wooden bunk and says to his startled dog:

"Lie down, Collie; it's only the midnight mail!"

But the rider thrills to her voice. He rides like a god, this sooty, keen-eyed engineer, and this is his winged steed. The trail is long and straight as a ploughman's furrow. It seems as if the road across the world is open. I try to calculate our velocity. The time-table must, of a certainty, be wrong. Does a bird fly swifter to its mate and to its home in the Southland? Will my soul fly swifter when it passes out into space? I trow not!

Did I say the way across the world was open? I did not know of this sudden curve that skirts the brink of death. We take it with a horrifying celerity, and our black devil shies wickedly. My throat tightens. I would jump and take a sporting chance of sudden death, but the thing is too obviously suicidal. No, no! I shut my eyes and pray the angel of the Lord as he passes by to spare the Padre and me. The Padre laughs because my face is blanched, and I lie and say I was not frightened—that is, not very much—but I am glad to hear the grating of the brakes and the slither

of wheels as this monstrous, plunging projectile is held up to a standstill.

I love the man who stands by the track o' dark nights and waves the lantern that the engineer may see it. I have never seen his face for, always, he is in the dark, but often I have seen his hand, so that he must be a man and not an angel, as one might guess if put to it. As yet, no writer has told us what he stands for. Longfellow interpreted to the world "The Lady with the Lamp" as exemplified by Florence Nightingale, but where is the eye and the heart and the pen to sense the meaning of the man with the lantern? How I wish the gods had given them to me!

XII

Values

Shapely, slender, debonair,
From her coils of blue-black hair
To her dainty moccasins;
And I met her for my sins,
Somewhere back of Ottawa,
Among the oldest hills.

—Tom McInnes.

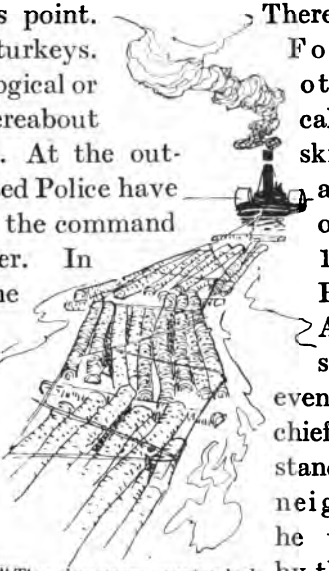
At Prince Albert a fine, steel railway bridge has been built across the Saskatchewan. When last here I crossed it on an old ferry, the motive power of which was the current of the river. They gibed me for crossing, but the opposite shore has always a lure for me.

As I stand watching the bridge, one section of it opens to let a tug through with a tow of logs. These impetuous voyagers look like huge, brown cylinders that have been herded into a vast raft.

What a foolish expression that is: "Stupid as a log." Why, man dear, a log has an ingenuity so devilish that it is uncanny. One log can so jam itself that it stays the course of ten thousand others. It can roll up a bill of expenses to the owner thereof that will make even his teeth ache, and it can kill a whole gang of river-drivers if it

be so minded. I know all about their tricks; indeed I do. And wasn't it a log that piloted Columbus to America, or something like that?

Twenty miles from Prince Albert, the north and south branches of the Saskatchewan join at a place called The Forks. There are said to be elk aplenty at this point. There are also numerous wild turkeys. For some reason, ornithological or otherwise, the people hereabout call the wild turkey a crane. At the outskirts of the town the Mounted Police have a post which is under the command of Inspector Pennefather. In 1885, at the time of the Riel Rebellion, Prince Albert was the scene of stirring and troublous events, for Big Bear and his chiefs made a stubborn stand in the surrounding neighbourhood. When he was ultimately taken by the police, Big Bear was brought here and put in a cell at the barracks. He was accompanied by his little son—who was described as a copper-hued boy with small, black, bead-like eyes—and by one councillor, who rejoiced in the unpretentious title of "All-and-a-half." Big Bear was not, as his name might lead one to imagine, a formidable person, but a shrivelled-up little



"These impetuous voyagers look like huge, brown cylinders."

piece of humanity with a cadaverous, weather-wrinkled face. He finally agreed to make treaty, but wished to have the unique proviso inserted that none of his tribe should ever be hanged. I may add, for the satisfaction of the curiously inclined, that Big Bear was the first to be hanged himself.

There are many Indians at Prince Albert. The town would be benefited in looks if some of them could be induced to move on to the land. It is a problem to know what to do with the Indian who wanders slothfully around town, for it is not so easy to make a cameo out of a sandstone. This red-skinned Northman has been, it would seem, fashioned in a rude way, by a rude hand, out of the sullen, unmalleable forces of the world. An ambitious Indian is out of place. He is the man without a country. He has acquired our language, customs, taste in drinks, and second-hand clothing, without our training of centuries in self-restraint and discipline.

I am told the matrimonial cards have been so badly shuffled here that many of these people are half-bloods. This is probably true, for nearly all the children show the white strain. Their parentage, like that of James Yellowplush, is "wrop up in mist'ry." The mystery, be it understood, relates only to their paternity. None are the children of white women. It is a self-evident fact that the men of the North have not been over concerned with the retention of their baptismal innocency;

or it may only be that the atmosphere has had a tendency to " mellow " their ethics.

All people in the North seem agreed that the Indian is a better man than the half-breed. If this contention be true, the squaw might say to the pale-face what the Scotchwoman at Kincardine, Ontario, used to say to her husband. A. McCharles tells of it in " Bemocked of Destiny." The husband was an ugly little black runt, whereas the wife was big, fair, and well-fed as the kine of Bashan. Every one of the children resembled their father and, when greatly exasperated, the woman would sum up all his iniquities in the crushing and final charge, " And ye spoilt the childer on me." Yes, the squaws might say it, for I warned you once before that they are a commonplace lot.

The squaw is unquestionably worshipful of her lord. She is the docile Laughing Water of a degenerate Hiawatha. Often he sells her to any bidding white man. The bid is a bottle of whisky. This is what certain loose-mannered white men call " squaring " the Indian.

It is true that some of the leading families of this district are half-breeds, born in wedlock. Many years ago young squaws married Scotch, French, or English traders, and reared children who, to-day, are a credit to their mother and to their mother-country. Still, no cultured white man can say to a squaw, " Thy people shall be my people," without having certain mental reservations.

Wit has been defined as a juxtaposition of dissimilar ideas. It is a definition that will apply to these mixed marriages.

Old-timers have told me that the first half-breeds, who were children of the Hudson's Bay men, spoke exceptionally pure English. They had a Scotch accent, and always spoke of a dead man as "deceased." Nowadays, they say he is a "deader."

The Selkirk settlers prided themselves that they did not intermarry with the Indians. This is also true of the Irishmen in the North. Notwithstanding their national traits of love and gallantry, there is no such a thing as an Irish half-breed.

XIII

The Wheat Fairy

Allons! Whoever you are, come travel with me!
—WHITMAN.

SOMEWHERE in Saskatchewan, about fifty miles from Prince Albert, there is a farm of 2,240 statute acres. I have not been able to figure it out whether it belongs to us or whether we belong to it. "Gentleman farming" does not pay in Canada. It is as extravagant as putting butter on bacon. A racehorse, an automobile, or even a flying-machine, are modestly priced pleasures compared with it. This is particularly true when you try to farm five hundred miles from your base of operations. It gives you ample opportunity to observe that the golden sheaf and the golden fleece are by no means synonymous expressions.

I mention this to the Padre, but he wholly disagrees with me. He always does. He points out that money spent in sod-breaking, wire-fencing, granaries, and so on, and so on, and so on, goes to what he calls "the capital account." He is probably right. Nevertheless, I believe capital accounts kill more people in western Canada than all other causes combined, and I have no doubt a

post-mortem examination would disclose the words graven on their hearts just as "Calais" was on Queen Mary's. It is the skeleton in the closet that is hard to fatten.

When I am at a loss for inspiration, I always find myself making nice calculations on the fair sheet of my manuscript, in the which I multiply the number of bushels per acre with the price per bushel, and subtract from the product the expenses of harvesting and marketing the same; the result of which calculations cause direful dismay even to me who am a lover of lost causes. The trouble with money is that it cannot be spent twice.

My lord and master is superintending the loading of our grain on cars—when he is not wiring for quotations, worrying the station agent about more cars, or trying to figure out why farm horses and farm hands move so slowly. It relieves his feelings to tell me all about it at least a dozen times a day. Just now he is nailing in a grain door which has not been properly fastened. He is fairly seething with wrath, and says these teamsters have plenty of time in which to do nothing. Old Duncan Maclean is standing by, telling him how it ought to be done. When you do anything in the North, everyone gives you advice. He does not see the green glint in the Padre's eye that I do, else he would discreetly retire.

Old Duncan, who is sixty years old and somewhat more, tells me it is "a saft day." He

insists on shaking hands when we meet. His is not a white hand, nor a "saft" hand, but it is kindly. We sit on the edge of the station platform and have a harmless talk about mallards, the crop, the scarcity of cars, and the merits of gasoline

"Old Duncan is going to have the scalp of a gentleman with the unkind name of Buggins."

engines as compared with steam for farming purposes. Also, we tear the Government to tatters. Old Duncan tells me that eastern manufacturers send their poorest articles to the West and charge first-class prices for them. In his new wagon the

spokes rattle and the tires are loose because the wood has not been properly seasoned. His complaint is not without grounds. This is a woeful mistake on the part of the manufacturers. They are fluttering the goose and presently the golden eggs will be kept at home. Old Duncan is going to have the scalp of a gentleman with the unkind name of Buggins from whom he bought the wagon.

Our conversation turns on a young Englishman who is in the village spending his remittance money. Two other Englishmen are keeping close in his wake, for the youth is evidently "standing treat." They have been of a lower social status in England, and are doubtless telling him the colonials are "hupstarts." He is very, very drunk, and looks ill. Old Duncan says he is an unlicked cub, but I have an idea he has been licked too much and too often. If we Canadians err on the side of making our children independent to the point of impudence, the English go to the other extreme. They break their butterflies on a wheel. This youth has likely been entirely dominated by his nurse and mother in earlier life and, later, by his father and tutor, so that all his fibre has been rubbed away and nothing left but the polish. All life's covers have been beaten for him, and he has probably never once had to exercise initiative in anything that mattered. He is a weakling and a ne'er-do-well. Poor lad! my heart goes out to him with an exceeding pity.

Assuredly there should be a great mother in

the world whose care would be the mending of human lives and the wiping away of sin-scars. Old Duncan says there is such, and that many have found her in this new Northland—that all could who cared to seek her out. But it is un-Canadian and unjust to draw undue attention to the remittance men who come out to have a "go" at farming, for they are an infinitely small proportion among the intensely vital Britons who come annually to Canada and who, every day, are happily demonstrating that they are the right men in the right place. Besides, it is only fair to acknowledge that all remittance men are not bad oats gone to seed. Once in a blue moon a man learns his lesson and makes good. I know several who have settled down in properest fashion, with work to wife, and bid fair so to live till death them part.

The Canadian who puts up the notice "No Englishman need apply" is an ill-conditioned puppy. I have never seen such notices, so they must be comparatively scarce, but I have heard of them. It is quite within an employer's province privately to discriminate concerning workmen for, assuredly, he who pays may call the tune; but he has no right to be grossly offensive to his fellow men. I delight in that Englishman who, on seeing such a notice, raised his eyebrows and said, "By Jove! Copied off the gates of hell."

And Old Duncan and I talked about the so-called "American invasion." My preceptor says the Americans are, by all odds, our best settlers

in that they bring both wealth and experience to the country. They adapt themselves quickly too, our agricultural conditions being almost identical with those of the western States. The Americans, he says, are loyal to Canada for they appreciate the liberty of action, stability of law, excellent police protection, and the wide opportunities for accumulating wealth, which are to be found on this side the border line. And why shouldn't they be when we are the same people in everything but the matter of a piece of coloured bunting? I know that we are kinsfolk, because we make faces at them. When we cease to be, we will discard our family manners and be more polite, as is our wont with strangers.

Every day I explore a new trail, for the country is seamed with them. In the North, they are vastly appreciative of the straight line. The streets, the sections, the house-fronts, the wires, the railways, are without a shadow of turning, but the blessed trails are an exception; they wander free as the air. You do not find trails here; you lose them.

One soon wearies of a straight road that keeps discreetly between fences. But a trail lures one on and on just to see what is round the next bend. And yet the real pleasure is not so much in what one sees as in the things one feels.

I try to open up my locked senses that I may take in life. I would be free to the sky and the air and the sun, until I feel at one with them. It

is not easy, though, for I am ever conscious of leaden feet, but, sometimes, a good god catches me up into some place that is heaven for aught I know. In it, just to breathe is a delight. And when I have no mind to walk, I rest me under the trees and marvel greatly how people can ever worry about tariff bills, free grace, or the North Pole.

A herd of cattle are grazing near by in a fat, good pasture. They eat and eat, and never seem satisfied. These cud-chewers, like some folk with souls, make hay while the sun shines, and eat it in the dark. From the distance, comes the palpitant cry of a coyote, with all the shrillness of a bugle blast. It is a cry neither beastly nor human—a wordless, throat-tearing howl, that might make you believe the owner thereof was a terrible, much-to-be-shunned fellow, whereas he is a faint-hearted weakling who is merely advertising his shabbily-filled stomach.

The Pilgrim Fathers tell how, when lost in the woods, they were terrified by the roar of "lyons" and had met wolves that "sat on their tayles and grinned" at them. Dear souls! No wonder they mistook the coyote's ungentle voice for that of a lion.

And somewhere, not far away, a bird is fluting a madcap madrigal in a sweet abandonment of song. For a little time she is quiet but, once and again, she breaks into a rollicking song of ecstatic joy. It is almost a spring song. I wonder why

she is so glad. I trow *he* has come home again, and she is unpacking his valise. This must be it!

In the quietude that the trees afford, it is sometimes given to us to be curiously a-chime with Nature's mood. In spite of our caustic minds and calloused souls, Nature holds us in tether. She is the great mother from whose apron strings we are never wholly free. This is why in wild-wood pleasaunces the fancy dallies with delirious themes! This is why one sometimes gets too near Eden and catches a glimpse of the flaming sword.

Out of the lacy shadows, with glad feet and blithesome, come the little fairy folk of the Northlands to be awhile with me. (I always wear a bit of green to coax the fairies.) From the black, winding ways of the spruce come brown, Bacchic girls, cone-crowned and love-drowsy, to weave an olden dance with wave-like motions. A panting dryad, deliciously afraid, flies from an eager faun that is half wolf and half man. She is the dryad of the white woodways where the birch and cottonwoods grow. A revel rout of wild-footed nymphs from the prairies trapese across the sward. With saucy quips and cranks, and many sweet pretends, they advance, retreat, and wave me kisses. Frolic beauties are they, sired of the wolf-men. I could catch them if I tried.

This lightsome little romp blew in to me on a wanton wind. She is a coquette to the core. Her dress is of emerald green and shining gold, for she is the wheat fairy. You may see the brush

of the sun in her hair. It is copper-coloured, and when she shakes it free a red rust falls on the grain. Of all the fairies she is most fickle, and if you so much as breathe a word against her, she will bid the pixies fling cutworms and grasshoppers on your fields. These be wayward pixies of sibilant, sly tongue, and they sing to me elfin songs. Impish are they and of wandering mind, and it is well known that at the hour of the owl they go forth on wildling bronchos to do their little deeds of ill.

In the train of the wheat fairy there is also a grim ogre, who is never far away. His name is Hangman Hail, and his joy is to twist the heads off the stalks when they are near to harvest. To placate the little wheat woman, you must from the day of All Fools till the night of the full moon in August, pray only to the elements, for the sun is her father, the soil her mother, and her nurse is the rain.

"From the black, winding ways of the spruce, come brown, Bacchic girls, cone-crowned and love-drowsy."

Open Trails

The willow pipes of the Northern genii have a spell in them, for always they play to your tune however tangled it may be. What do they play ? A boding tune, a merry song, a plaintive minor, a trailing, dreamy measure, a call of passionate madness.

No, no ; you are quite wrong. 'Tis not my own mind's fantasy. 'Tis not a home-sickness of the soul. Listen ! and even now you may hear their luring, sense-stealing whispers, and this is what they say :

Come and drink our golden wine
And sip our silver dew ;
They are outpoured, Lady Mine,
Just for you.

We have come from far and near,
Bearing tokens new ;
They stand waiting, Lady Dear,
Each for you.

Come with us to By-and-By,
Where the tears are few ;
There's a heaven, Lady High,
All for you.

XIV

The Catechist

Who is the potter, pray, and who the pot?
—OMAR KHAYYAM.

THE great event of the rural Sunday is—as it should be—divine service. Besides, how else should we be able, in the country, to wear our varnished boots and the beguiling, city-built things we have bought out of the store catalogue?

This is Thanksgiving Sunday, and the village church in Saskatchewan is appropriately decorated with yellow wheat and with red geraniums that drip over the altar as if a new paschal lamb had been slain. It is vastly grateful to my eyes, but I like better to shut them and drink in the odour of the apples and spruce, and the wine-breath of the grapes.

The congregation is singing:

> *"The Sower went forth sowing,*
> *The seed in secret slept."*

The words will not leave me. I keep turning them over and gnawing on them till the whole history of the world seems wrapped up in them; and in truth it is.

An Englishman in riding-leggings is acting as

usher; an Englishman who, on weekdays, works on the railway section, is playing the organ; and a blue-chinned, shock-headed catechist in a crumpled surplice is taking the service. He is from England also. And the one tiny stained window also came from "home." It was given originally to the school-house of St. James' Cathedral, Toronto, and after dimming their light for sixty-five years has been sent here to Saskatchewan. But I must not forget to mention the needlework in the chancel. It, too, was "made in England." It consists of three very beautiful panels of passion-flowers, and serves to cover up a large portion of the ugly, board walls, for as yet we cannot afford laths or plaster. For all these things we are very thankful and store up gratitude in our hearts, or in whatever place gratitude lodges.

The catechist tells us to make thanks for the telegraph, the Government, the railways, and a few other impersonal and abstract things. But my fair list of bounties is quite different. I say grace for the warmth of fire, for my books, for a sense of safety, for the odour of the grapes, and for the red of the geraniums. I return thanks for the times I have wagered and lost, and for the times I have wagered and won; for the long trails, with honking mallards that beat down a grey sky in the teeth of the wind; for rude hungers, and for the other things of the eternal vagabond, like hidden girds, smoke-tang, and the love of common people,

During his sermon, this lad drew several lessons from a sheaf of grain tied to the pulpit. He spoke of it as "this wheat," whereas it was barley, and we all smiled, for we countrybred folk are wise and love to laugh at city swells.

The Padre said on the way back to the hotel that we were not as thankful as our forbears, and evidenced as proof the fact that we did not call our children "Praise-God Bare Bones," "Thankful Ann," or "Henry Preserved Jones." He said, also, that the people of the North are too busy acquiring money and megaphoning their success to give due and proper heed to religion and culture. I am rather glad of this.

The catechist took dinner with us. We had tomato soup, roast turkey and cranberry sauce, potatoes, celery "of excellent pith," and lemon pie. He could not have been as thankful for the turkey as for the Government, because when he gave thanks for the latter he did so with a peculiar, fervid, high-pitched voice, but when he wished to express his appreciation of the turkey—of which he had a healthy sized piece—he said, in a different voice:

"Oh! I say, this *is* a jolly fine turkey."

He said it with gusto, as a nice, natural boy should. (It is queer that church atmosphere gives such an odd, snuffly sound to men's voices.) And then we pulled the merry-thought. I wished he would come to Edmonton to live, and for fear I should draw the shorter piece, he wished he could

live immediately adjacent. The bone was so hard that it would not break at all!

This boy catechist has been "out" two years. He first went to Chicago, where he entered a large departmental store. He clerked there several weeks before he realised that the object of the girls in asking him the hour was just to hear him say "hawf-pawst." Eventually, he came to Canada, and entered the ranks of the English catechists in Saskatchewan. He does active work in the spring and summer months; the rest of the year he attends lectures at the Diocesan Theological College. At present he is holding services at a lumber camp, but last Sunday the boss forbade him to preach because he had announced that the sermon would be on Socialism. This boy o' dreams has laid the matter before his bishop, who will probably support the boss; first, because the bishop has no jurisdiction over the boss of a lumber camp and, second, because the bishop represents the biggest capitalist concern in the world.

"Yes," says the boy, "much capitalism has made us mad!"

Yet the boss is right. As a man he may be, and probably is, a Socialist; as an employer he must, perforce, be a capitalist. No man who is placed over "the gang" can maintain discipline if he have pronounced views on brotherhood. His standpoint is that of fatherhood and—make no mistake about it—the father has to be boss.

Long ago, a Jew called Joseph told his brothers

how their sheaves came and bowed down to his sheaf, but the brothers took "the dreamer" and threw him into a pit. When this same Joseph assumed the attitude of boss down in Egypt, the most casual reader cannot fail to observe how the brothers suddenly became quite nice fellows.

Besides, when the gang use the word 'brotherhood," they do so with a more intense meaning than is usually attributed to it. It is the fraternity which Sébastien Chamfort described as "A brotherhood of Cain—that is, be my brother or I will kill thee."

No; the bishop or catechist who draws his salary from vested funds cannot consistently preach Socialism. Besides, from the nature of his text-book, the preacher lives so exclusively in Palestine that he does not know his own land. His sermons are too frequently the perpetuation of issues long since dead.

"I suppose I have made a mistake in quarrelling with the boss," muses the boy. "I suppose I have. Where's the use, after all, of kicking wooden dogs?"

XV

Village Diversions

" Here in a tavern haunt I make my lair."

ALL last night I had an ear-ache. It felt like a volcano in my head. It is quieter to-day, but still throbs sufficiently to keep me bed-bound. I quite agree with Martin Luther that ear-ache is directly attributable to the great devil himself. The Padre delicately intimated this morning that while the malady is extremely painful it is not necessarily fatal, except to those who have to wait on the patient. He contends that I am wholly illogical in attributing my misery to the hotel ventilation—or rather its lack of ventilation. He does not understand that I frequently go out bareheaded to escape the smoke from the bar-room, the fumes of liquor, and the odour of cooking and stagnant air.

All the windows of this little country tavern have double sashes, and they are hermetically closed. I do not wonder that consumption, that insidious vitality vampire, makes such ravages in America. It is a house disease, and can never be stamped out until people are put in jail for neglecting to air their apartments.

Village Diversions

My room is immediately over the bar, and I can hear every sound through the thin floor. Its habitués are either drunk or farmers. There is a third class which takes them all in—drunken farmers. I am strongly of the opinion that whisky should be a luxury of the rich. In everything else I am a Socialist. Beer ought to be $10.00 a bottle, and other liquors priced in proportion. The labourer should not have it at all. At first blush, this might seem an unfair discrimination but, as an actual fact, the wheel of fortune would revolve so quickly that each generation would have its turn; the rich would become labourers and the labourers rich.

Below me, a man with a raucous, awful voice is seeking to bawl his associates dumb. He says he is the only "gen'l'man" in the place. Ah, well! no great man was ever modest.

Outside, five eager, babbling pigeons are fluttering on the road. Their congratulatory clamour has its origin in the discovery of a little heap of wheat that has fallen from a wagon. They gobble it greedily. They have no need to wait for drink, for they have an organ in their stomach for secreting milk. Darwin says so. In this respect the pigeons have a superlative advantage over the drinkers in the room beneath.

A devil-sent cat from the barber-shop over the way disperses the pigeons without any ceremony. This must be the errant cat which yodelled last night when I was crying. The disturbance on the

road has aroused the tavern-keeper's dog, and he, in turn, attacks the cat. Grimalkin—assuredly a rogue in the wrong—arches his back till the fur thereon is like a bottle-brush. He is a veritable tiger of the jungle, and has not the least semblance to a Christian cat. And who ever heard even a tiger give vent to such robust and rounded expressions? The battle is short but decisive, and serves to prove the oft-repeated proposition that opinions have not the slightest chance against force.

Eight threshermen have driven up this single street of the village, and are alighting at our door. They wear sheep-lined, canvas coats, and the driver has one of Australian bearskin. It is mottled grey and white. I think it is the fur of the wombat. It makes him look like a big Percheron.

The men downstairs have turned their attention to theology. Next to grain and land values it is the favourite topic of this country. The priming for its proper consideration is extract of rye. One is saying he "don't hold with ritualism," and he swears profusely to enforce this view. He has a peculiarly greasy way of saying "God." He declares that "Catholics is cannibals." Schiller said this same thing, but in a more refined way. He declared religious devotees to be "theophagi," or god-eaters. The landlord, who is a Catholic, is bringing arguments and statistics to bear on his patron's enthusiasms, and he does it well. He

is better posted in Church history and doctrine than any of them.

I listen with interest to these farmers "fighting out great issues in small places." You may read the same arguments and deductions in Hooker, Kip, or Van Oosterzee.

It has started to snow, and the flakes caper like the pixie people in a magic dance. The men, passing up and down the street, are crouched and eyeless. They seem to grow smaller.

A boy brings in a herd of heavy-uddered cows, and again Sir Dog is to fore—or rather to heel. The contrariety and inhumanity of this dog is beyond the ordinary.

A city man steps out of the grocery store. He carries a sample case, so is presumably a commercial traveller. He might be a picture clipped from a New York clothing-store catalogue. Nevertheless, he has a clean, wholesome look, and I have no doubt is, in general, a "good fellow."

There goes the horse I tried to ride the other day—an unregenerate broncho that would have none of me. His owner told us he was a "fust-rate saddle horse," but the thing would only go up and down, never forward. It even kicked and lay down. The owner, a sun-reddened, erstwhile machine-agent, said, to soothe my feelings: "No woman ain't ever rid it yet," and also he said I was a "nervy skirt." I am still wondering why he wanted to kill me. It is after such an experience that one understands what William Blake meant

when he wrote: "The stars are threshed and the souls are threshed from their husks." The Padre was in a black humour over it, and called the man a cuckoo; but I thought of a much worse name.

Further down the street a draggle-tailed woman is hanging clothes on the line. They freeze before she gets the pegs in, and the stockings dangle stiffly, like long, black pokers. W-h-e-w! but it seems a long way to where picture hats are drinking tea, and where women dance for the heads of men.

The draggle-tailed woman has twins.

"Them's twins, ma'am," explained the husband, a thin little man with a tobacco-stained chin and a voice to split one's ear drums. "Third pair. Twins is like red hair; they run in families."

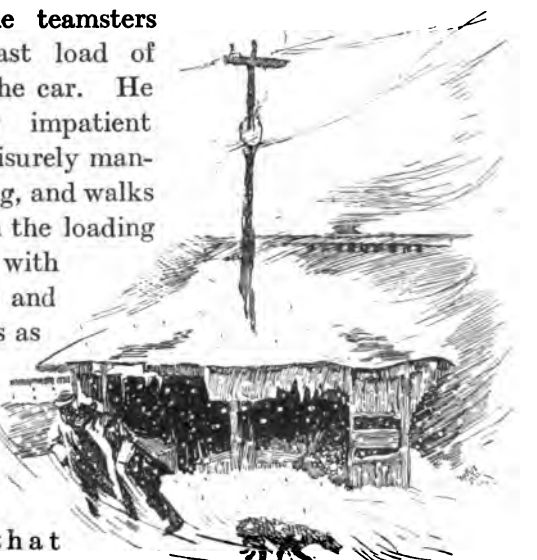
The air has become black with whiteness, and the snowflakes seem to boil, so furious is their haste. There is something wickedly defiant about this first storm of the season. I am not one of those who believe God moves in the storm.

The dining-room girl has lighted my lamp, drawn the blind, and brought my supper. She has two sweethearts, this girl—the bar-tender and the stableman. I could not decide which was most favoured but, yesterday, in one of the corridors, I saw him of the bar-room kiss her several times, with accuracy and at considerable length. People who are in love are nearly always unobservant. Their eyes and ears seem to be dulled; but, after all, there's no great harm in this.

My supper consists mainly of a prairie chicken

which the Padre shot this morning, and which the cook—dear woman!—has roasted for me. There is no skeleton at this feast except the chicken's. I pick the bones clean, and quite agree with those people—the Turks, I think—who maintain that taste is transmitted through the finger-tips. I hold a theory—perhaps fancifully—that if people never used forks they would not have dyspepsia. I seldom advance this, however, because of my supreme respect for Miss Rose Elizabeth, who taught me many things about the correct deportment of young ladies and concerning the subduing of fleshly appetites.

My man has not come in. He is doubtless watching the teamsters put their last load of wheat into the car. He gets wildly impatient over their leisurely manner of working, and walks up and down the loading platform with rapid strides and nervous jerks as though he were worked by springs, or like a pendulum that has swung off its



"The snowflakes seem to boil, so furious is their haste."

balance. The farmers are, of a certainty, marvellously deliberate, but probably this arises from the fact that they are not accustomed to looking a pay-sheet in the eye every fortnight, and their nerves are never abraded by a brat of a boy dodging round the office door with a sheaf of bank-drafts. Or if a draft should arrive by the medium of the post, the farmer has plenty of time to adjust his nerves, there being only three trains a week out. A farmer need never pay the banks—or anyone else—and, truth to tell, he rarely does. This is a point which I would respectfully call to the attention of the officials of the Department of the Interior who are seeking to lure farmers from the British Isles. Properly presented, this should be an overwhelming inducement.

The gang from the bar have gone home to supper, and quiet once more reigns below stairs. The landlord slithers down the hall with that heavy, flat-footed sound peculiar to landlords and porters. May Providence bless him for the hot-water bottle he got me last night! May Providence let him live long for the bromo-seltzer! Brown be his head, bright his eyes, and steady his slither for full fifty years! He is a patient and faithful man, this landlord, and serves the public in more ways than they dream of.

The station agent, John Smith, boards here. On train mornings the landlord calls him at four o'clock, for the train goes through at four-thirty.

"Smith," he says, with a note of command,

"get right up! It's four o'clock. Do you hear me, Smith?"

Smith hears. Fifteen minutes later, the knock at Smith's door is more pronounced, and the voice is agonised:

"Are you up, Smith? *Do* get up this *very* minute."

Smith gets up and, ten minutes later, makes a hurried dash for the station. I raise my blind to see if he gets his lamps lit before the express rounds the curve at the station. He has never missed yet. He is about twenty-four, and is painfully shy. He hands me several telegrams daily, and then bolts away as if I had the plague. He sits opposite me at the table, but does not speak. He belongs to what is known as "the passive element"—that is to say, he graces the scene without enlivening it. If I were going to remain I would catch him someday and hold him in a corner and insist on his "making friends." I am sufficiently older to make it proper, and sufficiently heavier to make it effective. I think I will, anyway. The thought pleases me much.

"'Smith,' he says, with a note of command, 'get right up! It's four o'clock.'"

In the hall there are no panes of glass in the transoms, so you cannot fail to hear every sound

from the other rooms. When I want to talk to the Padre, I get on a chair and throw one bedroom slipper through the two transoms, his room being directly opposite mine. If I don't want him, I throw two slippers. He comes, anyway, but will persist in laughing out loud when he sees the slippers coming.

If I have anything private to say to him—that is, if I want to tell him that I have no inconsiderable liking for him, or that I have changed my mind about this—I have to get up very close to his ear and whisper it, else the base men down the hall will hear every word I say.

I think I have made out a case against this tavern.

XVI

The Valley that Calls

Now I see the secret of making the best persons;
It is to grow in the open air and eat and sleep
with the earth.

—WALT WHITMAN.

FROM Saskatoon we make a side trip to the Qu'Appelle Valley. For hours our way lies over flat prairies, with their hard horizon lines. On winter nights an implacable wind sweeps across them with incalculable force, and the snows, although they fall lightly, possess the peculiarity of being the coldest snows in the world. On those winter nights it is lonely for a man in his yellow spruce shack, and the heat from his stove has a way of baking the tar-paper on the walls so that the odour of it suddenly carries him back to the docks of Harwich, Devonport, or along the crowded ways of the yellow Mersey. Sometimes it hurts, this hanker for home and for the outland trail, till a man's heart becomes sodden and his soul over-red with rust. At this self-same hour it may be well with him if he have a vision of a bright-faced girl in far-away England, stitching odds and ends for this prairie shack in Saskatchewan. I should not be surprised if the foolish fellow even

talks to her as though she were actually listening to his sweet-flavoured words and sense-stealing whispers. Men who live alone have such queer ways.

But it is not winter-tide yet, and the wheat is stooked or stacked in readiness for the thresher. In the meanwhile, the homesteader ploughs the yellow stubble-ground against next year's crop. He is a collarless, large-lunged, lean-hipped fellow. Up and down the black, unending furrows, up and down he goes. I wish he would say what he thinks about all the day long, all the way round. Once, aforetime, a ploughman on a Scottish field stopped and told us. It was a simple thing after all—something about a "crimson-tippèd flow'r," a girl, and a poet. The homesteader must be dreaming, anyway. He must be, for the word "delirium" means a man who ploughs a crooked furrow.

There is not so much as a willow gad on all these plains. Where they get their window props and boiler sticks I may not say.

"Glory be!" replies the Padre. "Sure an' it's the life of the coal trade."

He has an appraising eye, my lord and master, and only sees a tree as potential lumber—the absence of it as potential coal.

These prairie steadings will never be homes in the best sense of the word till tree-planting prevails. Men will rape the soil and pass on, as all nomads do, till they have planted trees and har-

vested them either in the form of boards, fuelling, or fruit. Then they become bound to the land; they set their stakes well and truly, deep and foursquare.

This is a comparatively new country through which we pass—that is to say, the railroad is new—so that in comparison with the vastness of the wide-flung steppes, the grain fields show up as mere inconsequential patches. The untilled land seems almost barren, and there is something about it that mocks the traveller. You go on and on, and never seem to arrive. The prairies are much too large. There is no variety of sun and shade; the days are either light or blackness, without the relief of sidelight or half-tone. For miles and miles the only sign of life is the gopher. He is a droll little sprite, and seems to be a free-commoner. All day long he does nothing but dart in and out the family warren, as if for the purpose of working off his excess energy. It is reported that he also harvests wheat, but I have never seen him attempt anything that savours so distinctly of labour. Someone has gone so far as to call gophers "voracious and insatiate vermin" which must be wiped from the earth regardless of cost. In the dining car this day I heard a fellow who advanced a unique theory for their destruction. He said it had been tried with fair success on the Australian rabbits. The gophers are to be caught in pitfalls, or in wire traps, but only the does killed. The bucks are to be liberated. Presently

—it is as clear as print—the bucks, being largely in the majority, will set about eating each other up, for all the world like those bonny fighters the Kilkenny cats. I should not be surprised if this thing worked out, but, of course, the gophers being of spontaneous creation, it is hard to say.

Here and there, we stop at a little settlement to drop off some commercial travellers, a bag of mail and, perhaps, a few express parcels. These villages are all the same—a church or two, a school-house, several hotels, a barber-shop with pool-room attachment, a land-office, a bank, a store or two, some few houses, and great piles of farm implements. Always there are implements—scarlet seeders, blue ploughs, green wagons, and black harrows. There are no trees in the prairie towns, and one wishes—one almost prays—the telegraph and telephone poles might burst into bud and blossom like Aaron's rod.

I never see a village store without an intense desire to own and operate it. Think of the opportunities one would have of studying human nature! Think of the sweets to be extracted from the news of the countryside! How good to roll it under your tongue! City folk cannot imagine the zest of life when some unusual happening touches a village to the quick, or when the village holds its sides. In the city it is our profligate habit to attend strictly to our own affairs, and we are prone to credit our neighbours with a like preoccupation. The Padre does not agree with me

for, after all, he is a very fallible being. He is of the opinion that the simple pleasures of village life and the freedom from business absorption are entirely over-balanced by the lack of proper lights and bathing facilities.

One of these villages is Lumsden. We stay off here for, at length, we have reached the far-

"I never see a village store without an intense desire to own and operate it."

famed Qu'Appelle Valley. In every direction the high tablelands, fat with grain, are bitten into by hundreds of intersecting ravines, up the sides of which the trees sweep like dark, tidal waves. Some great giant playing tricks did this thing.

The farmers hereabout are offensively rich; not only have their lines fallen into pleasant places, but also into wondrously rich ones. They do not

have to cut their corn in the blade as in some other walks in life I know of. Every mother's son has a shingle palace with big windows on the bow, an automobile, teams of imported Clydesdales, trunksful of municipal debentures, and a balance at the bank, not to mention a smile that can portend nothing but forty bushels of wheat to the acre.

The day of our arrival being Sunday, we went to the kirk. The pastor preached about heaven, and told us the Bible did not give many particulars about it. Nearly everything concerning Paradise is of a negative nature. There will be no crying, no war, no sun. This is a happy idea, for one gets weary of positives, especially in doctrines. For my part, I greatly desire a heaven where there will be no telephones; where none need stop writing for the sake of dinner, and where it is not criminal to stay abed of mornings and read. There are other negatives, but these will do for a start.

For once in my days I wanted to be a preacher, to make a sermon about the robins, and their hobnobbing nestlings, who have builded them a home on the cornice over the hymn-board. What an object-lesson for David's words: "Yea, the sparrow hath found an house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts, my King, and my God," or on those heart-breaking lines that sum up the pathos of all life, of all time: "The

birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."

These Lumsden kirkfolk are not commonplace, and I'll lay wager this nest was the subject of grave discussion at the session of the elders and, mayhap, a resolution was made concerning it. The flick of wings and the babble of birds make proper substitute for the incense which may, in other churches, accompany worship. Yes, even when the mother one falls into her family voice and says: "Ho! ho! little fellow; not—so—fast!" "Fie! oh, fie! who's the baby beating her wings to tatters?"—this and other staple dinner-talk peculiar to all nests whether of brown straw or brown stone.

Never were there such sad gluttons as these kirk broodlings. Their heads are so small; their mouths are so large. They clamour, and cajole, and cheep. I asked the Padre on the way home if he saw how eager they were, and he said:

"Oh, yes! had they been Methodist birds we must have called them 'anxious inquirers.'"

And he told me a man was once condemned to death for disturbing a sparrow in the temple of Æsculapius at Athens, for eastern peoples believe that birds who make their nests in a sacred building claim the protection of the deity, and it is a sacrilege to molest them. He also related another Greek story which he attributed to Herodotus. It appears that an oracle requested the people of Cyme to deliver to the Persians

a certain refugee or suppliant, and they were about to do so when Aristodicus, a citizen of Cyme, went through the temple and tore down all the nests he could find, whereupon a voice from the oracle's shrine exclaimed :

" Most impious of men, what is this thou darest to do ? Dost thou carry off my suppliants from my temple ? "

To which Aristodicus, at no loss for a reply, retorted :

" O King, dost thou aid thy suppliants and biddest us to surrender ours ? "

I much favour these stories about " impious " men, but cannot tell you if they be true for, oftentimes, my man makes them up to please me.

In the afternoon we ride our horses along the paths that wind through the river bottoms. These are the old stamping-grounds of the buffalo herds. In and out the glens we go, up and down the hills, " negotiating " vagrant trails where the hands of a hot wind scoop up the tassels of the cotton-plant and fling them full in our faces. It is a soft, white rain that is not rain. Sometimes, our way lies through a freshly-mown meadowland that drugs me to faintness. Or, again, we pass through a spread of flax, or down a ravine gorgeous with golden-rod, lavender mint, cone-flowers, blue bells, feverfew, wild parsnips, tansy, and low-growing roses, over which and through all the morning-glories tangle their way with indescribable confusion and beauty.

The Valley that Calls

The river that winds through this district is the Wascana. Being interpreted, the word means "a pile of bones." Years ago the Indians used to build fantastic piles of buffalo bones on its banks. Winnogene told me this.

The Wascana winds to the Qu'Appelle River —*the river which calls.* What does it call? Who does it call? Someday, someone will hush and listen; then we shall know.

Fish may be hooked in all these rivers if you can only have a sufficiently attractive bait. I try to make my bait alluring, goodness only knows, but these Northern fish, with highly eccentric scutterings, are content to take a snack off it and float away without so much as a thank you. Both fishing and virtue should offer better inducements than being their own reward. It is an arrangement that often proves detrimental to their pursuit.

Winnogene says you must never talk of taxes when you are fishing, because money was once taken from a fish for taxes, and ever since they loathe the word. It is also a bed-rock fact that it spoils the sport if a school be built near the water, for fish have an antipathy for bells. Cry shame upon the truants! Shame upon them!

We stop to converse with an Indian who came rocking down the trail on a sweat-crusted cayuse. It is a piebald, and its white patch is exactly the shape of the map of Asia, with Constantinople done in brown. The Indian comes from the Pia-pot Reserve, which is in this valley. Pia-pot,

he tells us, died recently. He was a Sioux chief, and his name indicates "Sioux with a hole in him," this because in a tribal feud, while yet a boy, he was shot through the body.

This is an alert looking Indian, and his features are hard and regular as a bronze medal. He rides with his legs hanging straight, like plumb lines. The Padre resents my admiring him. I know it because of the way he assumes an unduly casual tone, and says Indian men are only one part pigment and the rest laziness.

"Haw! haw! haw!" laughs a crow in a tree; "haw! haw! haw!"

After a time we stop at a ranch house to water our horses. It is a long, low building, with wide verandas and a beautiful garden wherein a fountain plays. The water has been piped from the hill that rises abruptly behind the house. It was here we met Winnogene. Her name, which was given her by the Indians, means "a ray of sunshine," or "a flashing ray of light." They illustrated the word by flashing a tin dipper in the sun. It is a good name, too, for she has a merry laugh that will not stay long under the bushel. She asked us in to drink tea, and ended by presenting us to her mother, a charming woman of marked culture. Before long, it was discovered that we knew her people "down East." This is how we came to stay for supper and to return to the ranch more than once. Winnogene's mother was the first white woman to settle in the territory of Assiniboia.

On the journey west, the last white man she saw was in a tent on the spot where the town of Virden now stands. In those days, this Qu'Appelle Valley was actually "No Man's Land," for it was not surveyed, the first lines being run shortly afterwards by the Canadian Pacific Railway. On the wall of the ranch parlour they have hung a rough oil-painting of their first home, showing a small flag on a hill, the use of which was to signal the men to dinner. This picture of the pioneer home is the more striking when you look at the costly and artistic furnishing of the present home. It takes no arrowy intuition to see that the family has become rich and increased with goods. It is good to listen to these tales of life, action, and thrilling human interest. Here is a thread of deep feeling, or a patch of pathos; there a web of gossamer gaiety. Sometimes tears fall on the pages, for Famine and Fear had a way of crouching at the door of the pioneer even as they crouched at the portals of the Virgilian Hades.

I count that a heyday on the which Winnogene took me out to where her father's cattle and horses range the plains and shelter in the hills, for this girl knows the broncho from its hoofs up, and is said to be among the most expert horse-wranglers and trainers on all these plains. It is good to see her sit, lithe and clean, across the saddle; to swing with her along the sinuous trails while the miles fall away, like the years in a land where life is always young; exceeding good to hear the whir

of the circling rope she casts on the air, and to shout and sing because the joy of it goes clean through my soul. What do we sing? Let me see!

"Ride with an idle whip, ride with an unused heel,
But once in a way, there will come a day
When the colt must be taught to feel
The lash that falls, the curb that galls, and the sting
of the rowelled steel."

What else?

"Roll up ye merry riders all, from hut and camp and town,
You'll have to stick like plaster when the stockyard rails go down.
But the boss will come down handsome, as the boss is wont to come,
To the first who brings the rebel under spurs and green-hide home."

Winnogene's horse is a tough-muscled animal with an ugly way of bending his lean head to his leaner knees, and lashing out behind. It is a play of head and tail that needs both skill and space, but this girl "quirts the bronch' aplenty," till he "minds his helm"—quirts him with an effectiveness which, however much I envy, I may never hope to surpass.

Neither is my horse as domesticated as one could wish. Winnogene says he needs "man-handling." He is an ill-favoured fellow; anyone can see that, and I should not be surprised to hear him curse and swear.

Your pardon, big Buckskin! Speed, stealthy feet, and staying powers should count for much in a horse, and so they do.

We philander over the ranges for hours, and all the time among horses that have never tasted oats or rawhide; in and out, among full-fed cattle that have never seen a stable or ever cost a penny.

As the beaver was once the unit of all values in this Canadian North, even so was the cow among the Italians and old English. It was *pecus*, and from this name we get our word "pecuniary." Our forefathers bought our foremothers with so many cows, according to the tilt of their noses or the tinge of their hair, in much the same way as an American woman of our century pays so many dollars to buy a title, taking an Englishman or an Italian as a necessary accompaniment. And here on the prairies, the cow, or *pecus*, may be considered as minted coin, for a man is rated by the size of his herd. It is a sane system, too, in that it conveys an exact pecuniary idea, just as when we describe a place as a four- or five-elevator village.

I wanted to rest off the saddle, but Winnogene would not let me. Steers might see fit to bear down on a woman afoot. She has heard that if you have the nerve to stand absolutely still before a charging steer, you will be safe, for no animal, however furious, will strike a thing that does not move. Winnogene thinks it would be poor policy to lend oneself to the experiment.

It is a sight to see this girl ride the herd down and rope an animal. It is cunning work, and moves the blood like a bugle call. I would barter my sphere, any time, to be able to keep my seat and hitch a plunging steer to my saddle-horn. Yes! or I would barter my hemisphere. The noose belongs to "the best circles" in the highest sense of the words. In the hands of an expert it is a missile, an anchor, a rudder.

There is a shrewd bite in the air as we turn back to the ranch house. A suave twilight has fallen over the plains, so that we seem to ride into the immensurate void of the sky. We make believe we are valkyries speeding to Valhalla. For my part, I am Brunhilda on Grani, my great, white horse. I, Brunhilda, who this day have been a goddess riding a wild horse into a wilder sky, must ever, hereafter, sink into womanhood. I, a wild valkyrie, to sit by the fire and spin! Cry out with horror, sisters eight, at this thing Wotan, Father of the Gods, hath said.

XVII

Laws of the Game

How these curiosities would be quite forgott did not such idle fellowes as I am put them downe.

—JOHN AUBREY

GOOD-BYE, O lily-mantled fields and birchen bluffs of Manitoba! Good-bye, imperial woods! O cool, deep woods of the North with your sweet enchantments! A parting bow! O wide-flung, serious plains of Saskatchewan! I am going away! Attend you well to me; I am going home to old Ontario—to the fair homeland of Ontario.

It is years since I travelled down this road, and although many changes have taken place, the scenery is still much too tame. The Dukhobors no longer live under sod roofs that leak for three days after a rain, or paper roofs that leak three days before one. Their new houses are of brick, with shingle roofs and with lines essentially Russian.

All the people seem to have progressed except the Indians, many of whom still live in smoky-topped wigwams. Although I'd as lief not live in one, it is only fair to acknowledge that, because of its great simplicity and protection from the weather, the Indian's tepee is the best tent yet invented.

Although new-built towns are springing up along the entire line of railway, the whole country is wretchedly thin of settlers. The cry of the country is for people.

The Galician builds his house on the corner of his quarter-section, so that there are always four houses together. This is a good plan, for the settlers form a little community, the members of which may be of mutual assistance. Neither are the women so lonely as they would be living on the centre of an isolated steading. I dare wager these people would have sympathy with that old lady who was troubled about the fact that God had no one to neighbour with. But this is only a car-window opinion and, as a matter of fact, the women may snarl at each other all the time like the United States and Japan. The fact that each mother seems to have a dozen children to rear may keep her too busy to quarrel. The " infant industries " of the Galicians are on a splendid basis, for no one, as yet, has secured a monopoly of the business. Nature has taken care that the race instinct remain tremendously strong in these women from southern Europe. And it is well with the children. Their mothers will teach them to handle mould, plant seeds, and gather in the harvest, even as Metaneira, the wife of Celeus, King of Eleusis, first taught agriculture to mankind. I quote Metaneira because the men-folk rarely do her honour, and because, as the above sentence intimates, she has among the

women of the North very many and very worthy successors.

It is two nights and a day's journey to Winnipeg. A dreadful thing happened last night. I haven't dared to tell the Padre. *Mea culpa!* I may as well say it right out, although it makes me sorry I am alive. *I got into the wrong berth!* It is worse than making the wrong discard—much worse. The step-ladder had been moved one section further down and, when I returned, I located my berth by the ladder instead of by the number. That was the way of it. I had taken off one slipper when a polite, but unmistakably masculine, voice said: "I think you have made a mistake, madam."

A settler from central Europe.

I did not make a second mistake by apologising or screaming. I fled. . . . On second thoughts, I did make it. I forgot my slipper. I was writing this morning when the porter asked me if I owned the slipper he had in his hand—a fawn-plaid thing—but I only shook my head, bit the end of my pen, and summoned up a far-away, unconcerned look as if I were thinking of the angels or something equally remote. I can see that he and the mature, white-waistcoated gentleman suspect two

girls down the aisle. Dear things! this is distinctly a case of where ignorance is bliss. It is quite palpable that this happening has all the elements of a romance—a new Cinderella, with possibly an American millionaire as fairy prince.

But, for that matter, all the world's romances might be resolved into a few well-known stories such as Cinderella, Jack the Giant-Killer, Bluebeard, and Red Riding Hood. We find these same stories in every race and in every age, showing that there is a racial psychology as well as an individual one, and that in this race-mind certain needs or conditions perpetuate themselves in stories. Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau, Romulus and Remus, Castor and Pollux, Baldur and Hödur, Martha and Mary, are all the same story. It is the story of the negative and positive. Someday, when I have grown wise enough, I intend to write a book on the theme.

But this episode of the berth and the slipper might also suggest a melodrama.

Main outline of the plot:—Man found dead in his berth—suspicions point to foul play—woman's slipper found in berth—Pullman locked—luggage searched—mate of the slipper found—woman from Edmonton arrested—post-mortem examination reveals man to have been choked by a piece of cork from a whisky-bottle, etc. etc. etc.

There is no end to the complications that might arise out of a slipper lost in these circumstances.

We find the station at Winnipeg is largely given up to a party of immigrants who are being shepherded by a smart Russian. He acts as interpreter, and looks like a Government official. Dirty-nosed, diminutive creatures of uncertain sex, clad in sheepskin coats, sleep on the benches in the waiting-room, fall off the benches, suck an orange or a thumb, and jabber in a language of agitated consonants. In Hungary these children were liabilities; in Canada they are assets. Each family has twelve children, if not more. These crusading crowds trekking to the north are of unfailing interest to me. Their migration seems to be an instinctive one, like the fish that swim against the stream to its source, or the birds that fly north in spring to make their nests. When they come south again, they will have tied and branded a quarter-section each; they will be rich and increased with goods, and Canadians in every fibre of their bodies—all except the people from France, who are irretrievably French.

After breakfast we visit the Grain Exchange, where—that I may become bridlewise to the methods of the mart—one of the members "takes a whirl" in wheat for me. In two minutes wheat advances half a cent and I "clear-up" twenty-five dollars. There is no easier way of making money, not even by marrying for it. It is a heady joy, and fills you with a delirious desire to possess the earth and the fullness thereof, without any mortgage disabilities. The members of the Exchange stand

in a ring that looks like a wheel with a hub; and, as a fact, it is a wheel—a veritable wheel of fortune. I believe they call it the "Pit." As you look down from the gallery, it is borne in on you that this Pit is the heart of the country, the railways its arteries, the trails its veins.

When I was a little girl I heard tell that the rainbow followed the plough. This may be true, but one end of the bow rests on this Pit, and at its foot may be found the proverbial bag of gold.

The game is carried on by buyers and sellers. If a man have twenty thousand bushels of wheat to sell, he offers it in the open market—that is, in the Pit. If takers are brisk, the market keeps stiff or advances. The reverse applies equally. It is the same old commonplace law of supply and demand. If a seller goes back on his offer, he is "posted," which means his error is written on the wall. If he does so twice, he is likely to be dismissed from the Exchange, just as a bad boy is expelled from school.

We see Winnipeg from a car, and take the street corners at the rate of thirty miles an hour. I think it rather poor fun, and in the face of imminent death review my past life, deducing that I have been absolutely useless except in so far as I have served as a painful example of incapacity. Our chauffeur, grim and goggle-eyed, never speaks. He is busy making subtle calculations as to the space required to pass another

hub. With much trepidation I ask him if he would mind dropping to twenty miles an hour, and he does so for quite two minutes.

The man who is showing us the city has made his money by dealing in real-estate. He is a droll fellow, and bubbling over with queer stories about boom days in Winnipeg. He has something to tell about nearly every corner lot.

"See that one! Worth $3,500 a foot. Once offered for an old pair of boots and a bottle of whisky! No takers!"

"Lot over there bought by chap down east. Sold by city for arrears of taxes! Worth $3,000 a foot. He didn't know it was loaded!"

And so he rattles on and on, spinning a reel of gossamer for us; but, sometimes, a thread that is dark shows up in its lustre—a thread of defeat and despoliation—for the word "Speculation," you must have heard, not infrequently loses its capital letter. A speculator may lose his head, too, which is only another way of saying he loses his capital.

I like to talk to these men of the street. They have the forward vision out of which comes success. It is the power which enables them to condense their cloud into rain. And if a strong blast blows their cloud away, they do not whimper—not they. It's only the luck of the game, y'know. They have grit, too, and ardour and staying power. More than once I have seen a real-estate man follow his quarry, day in and day out, with nerves

every whit as taut as a hunter who is stalking big game.

In the face of the witticisms and criticisms levelled at these men of the North, I opine they have made ten thousand fortunes for their patrons for every one they have dissipated. Why, I know a pond of water up in our province which " sharks " divided out into city lots and sold to " suckers " in the South. Presently, the directors of the exhibition wanted new grounds, and this lake lay in the centre of them. Now came the day of the suckers. This water was the one thing the directors required for " a beautiful, artificial lake," and, needless to say, they had to pay both a beautiful and artificial price for the same. These are the amenities which might fairly be supposed to render the pot mute in the presence of the kettle.

In all matters financial the real-estate man tries to hold his own against the public, and, let it be said in passing, that he not uncommonly succeeds. Although a little, shall I write, *inexact*, he has, nevertheless, quickness to seize the humours of the people. He is " prepared for his age," like the man Emerson writes of in one of his essays. This is why I enjoy reading " boost " literature. There is a silent witchery about it that works in my blood. There is something so very alluring and convincing in an " undeveloped area," or in arable lands with a southern aspect, " where tomatoes ripen out of doors and wheat matures in eighty-six days." And if a place is " bound to

become a distributing point"—as nearly all places are in the North—it proves an absolute clincher.

If the family purse were not tied in a double-bow knot, there is no saying what would happen when I have considered all these superlative advantages. Before now, people have cut the knot, or slit the family purse; but where's the use when the purse is empty? But if the purse were full, and I were keen to play the game, why should I stand back and make wry faces because my money only earned a hundredfold when I expected a thousandfold? Why, forsooth? This must have been what Thomas W. Lawson had in his mind when he said, "The people are a joke."

I hope some day a clever man behind a clever pen will set down, for the diversion of our grandchildren, this romance of the real-estate men. It is a romance which, with the settlement of the country, will fizzle and die out the same as that of the Indian, the rancher, and the Mounted Police. But think of the brain storm such a writer would have to undergo to find a name for the book! All the appropriate titles seem to have been taken up by Thompson Seton, Izaak Walton, and William J. Long.

XVIII

To Visit Uncle Sam

"Ho!" cries the country mouse, "this kind of life is not for me, I find. Give me my woods and cavern! There at least I'm safe!"

—HORACE

WE travel to Ontario by way of the United States. We journey at night and spend the days in the cities. It is a long ride across the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. For miles we pass through a factory district where craterous chimneys belch their baleful smoke—the grimy incense of labour that dirties the blue skies themselves. In the sooty crevasses called streets, you may observe, by reading the advertisements, that they have attached the name of a great man to their lager beer. Of a surety, fame has fallen on bad days. It stands on its head with its heels in the air. It is far better to be a mediocre, everyday fool of a person.

In the United States, Canadians from the northern provinces do not feel themselves to be foreigners. In reality we are much more in our element than in England, for our modes of living and thinking are almost identical. Our differences are inconsequential, and neither country can claim

any particular superiority. If you want to know what northern Canada will be like in twenty-five years, visit the western States. In a score of years we will have the same proud-roofed flamboyant buildings of granite, marble, and wrought iron; the same impregnable, belligerent sky-scrapers that do ape the impiety of Babel; the same elevated roads stalking along on stilts, for we, too, shall be outgrowing the earth's surface—these, and an enormous agglomeration of flats whose only excuse for depriving the streets of the light of heaven is the fact that they pay big dividends to their owners. Even now, we have the same types with, mayhap, a slight modification caused by the more dense population in this southern republic. We have the same well-brushed business men who carry the suggestion of possible ruthlessness—the men who would work their way to success however hard the way or the means. We have the same labourers on the boulevards, raking with one hand and holding a cigarette with the other; the same frowsy sports who look most like bulldogs; the same old drinks—if we may substitute green tea in the States for black in Canada; the same long, white stretches of asphalt; the same old songs. Whether or no we will have the same flag, even the gods may not say. There are some who have it that the heart follows where the trader lists. This being the case, the prospects of a coalition are by no means imminent. It is true, as Mr. Andrew Carnegie points out, that we

of Canada purchase our Union Jacks in New York; yet, on the contrary part, the present imposing tariff walls are too high and much too thick to permit of any serious flirtation over the top.

In Canada, our Government is straining every nerve to secure immigrants. We need them, too, because of an untilled continent at our feet, and yet one's heart grows faint to think of our fair-spaced Northern cities becoming a black, close-piled mass of streets, where people will wear white faces like men who have died. It is an unwholesome dream.

In the city, if one be poor, he must beg or steal. In the country, without money or without price, he may build a house of logs, or sods, or stones; he may get water from the springs, fish from the streams, birds from the air, berries from the bushes, and fuel from the forests.

I hate these big cities which cut your soul to their tape. They kill the self-respect of the poor man, exhaust his vitality, cripple, blind, and scar him till he is too vitiated to know that he is weary to the very marrow and only half a man. People are like carrots: plant them too close together and you get nothing but greens.

The Padre says I have been away from the cities so long that I have lost my sense of perspective, but I argue I am now able to see with unbiased eyes. You may "take sides" gentle, or ungentle, reader, as your purse, pride, or prejudice may permit.

There are, though, some advantages in city life, and I intend, when I can screw my courage to the sticking point, to move to a town, where I will take rooms over a butcher's shop in a back street. In this location no person will even look at me, so that my inspirations shall suffer no cross-currents, and I shall have an untrammelled opportunity to write my "Book of Secrets" and "Second Thoughts." It is not likely these will find a publisher, much less a public, but their transference to paper will relieve my mind of a weight and enable me to die happily.

From the number of postal cards for sale bearing his picture, I should fancy Father Hennepin to be the patron saint of these twin cities. It were far better to have adopted Buffalo Bill or some other member of the Pony Express as tutelary guardian, for, at best, this Hennepin was a commonplace, shabby-minded fellow, and, according to some historians, even a vaunter and a liar. These citizens are like the children of Greece, who used to mistake lame blacksmiths for Vulcan, the husband of Venus. And, heart of God! how La Salle hated Hennepin. It was an old, but ever pertinent, question: "Who will rid me of this turbulent priest?"

Who views not the Capitol at St. Paul goes home a crushed person. It is a fine building, but will be finer when time has mellowed its colours and smoothed its angles. We ascend to the entrance by a mountain of granite steps. So

imposing are they that I am filled with a sense of dignity such as a conqueror must have who is about to take possession. We wander through the stiffly magnificent chambers in an unmethodical, agreeable sort of way, sit in the Speaker's chair, stand agape at the wonder of the great marble staircases on which wagons could pass with yards of hub space, shout in the echo room, and take a fairish luncheon in a long, corridor-like café, the walls of which are inscribed with mottoes in German. I did not know that they in the States also had a dual language.

I refuse to tell you about the painting on the ceilings. I exhausted all my admiration in replies to the Padre's enthusiastic questions. Furthermore, it makes my neck ache, even now, when I think of the imminent risk I ran of dislocating it. Besides, while gazing upward at these allegorical figures, I was thrice brought back to literal things by falling over spittoons. If I were the State Governor, I would abolish these abominations and make the men have their mouths examined for tobacco before entering. Or the Governor might arrange to rent spittoons to the "gentlemen" at the rate of a dollar the half-hour. The spittoons could be suspended from their necks by a chain. What an El Dorado of treasure it would be for the Exchequer—almost as good as a licence to steal. The gentlemen might not mind the inconvenience of the chain if it were explained to them that spitting may become a religious exercise, even as

the Messalians made it in the fourth century, hoping thereby to cast out the devils they inhaled.

Between the cities there stretches a grove of oaks that ought to be classic, if, indeed, it is not. I do not know why God did not give us oaks in Alberta; He has been so markedly kind in other ways. I think I understand the feelings of Thoreau when he said he was so much in love with a particular oak that it would be wicked for him to wed a woman.

To Northern eyes the most beautiful colour in the streets of Minneapolis is on the fruit stalls. The fruiterers build up solid banks of white, purple, red, and yellow grapes that make a seductive appeal to all the senses at once. I taste pawpaw apples for the first time, and am grossly hungry for more. The Padre calls them "custard apples," and says they belong to the order *Anonaceæ*. I am not so sure about the order, but they taste like sweet vanilla custard, and look like smooth-skinned cucumbers full of brown beans.

The smell of these streets is varied. I try to analyse it as I wait for a street-car. It is the smell of oranges, tobacco, beefsteak, musk, coal-smoke, gasoline, street-sweepings, sweat of hot horses, stale saloons, and roasting pea-nuts.

We are much out of style in the North. Our dresses are not sufficiently attenuated. We have not caught the studious simplicity and cling of the mode as it is in the South. It is a mode, too, that sits well on these winsome women. If I

were a man I would want to marry one of these American girls. Indeed, I would want to marry several of them. They are good to look at—sweet, wholesome, brightly good-humoured, and laughingly intelligent. I am strongly of the opinion that foreign noblemen do actually fall in love with them, and that papa's money is only incidental—agreeable, of course, but still incidental.

In the same way, the American admires our Canadian woman. To some extent she is different from her republican sister. He is attracted by this difference, by the mystery in her—the page he has not read. I do not know what he says to the girls, but I have heard tell that he breaks the ice with the married woman by expressing his regret that she is not a widow. Once, in a sadly misguided moment, I told this to my lord and master, and he said this was no cause for conceit on the part of the woman. The American only meant that as a widow she would be eligible to file on a homestead. Now, what do you think of that? If anyone but the Padre had told me, I could never have believed these delightful men could be so coldly calculating.

On one street corner we stood to hear a woman scolding a man. She was an unlovely woman, and very drunk. The Padre found it distinctly amusing, because the man, a very odd kind of fellow, never once replied to her mighty tirade. I could hardly prevent his questioning the man about what church he belonged to. I would have

much preferred the Padre to consider the incident from its educative standpoint.

"One is greatly impressed here by the number of negroes."

One is greatly impressed here by the number of negroes. Just now, the newspapers are discussing the nationality of a child born in the United States whose father is a Chinaman and his mother a negress. The consensus of opinion makes him an American. Presently, we shall have the same problem in Canada. Indeed, even now we have negroes in the North, and the settlers do not like them. Have you not heard? Hush, and I will whisper it! They have hair on their spine and tails like monkeys, which they keep hidden. It is well known that they have.

Although the white man looks at the negro across a raw, racial instinct that has its origin in some far-back secret of blood or breeding, we can hardly doubt that the race will be ultimately hybridised by yellow and black blood. The colours run. Indeed, this is rapidly becoming the case, for the racial hatred displayed by the white man

to the negro does not extend to the female black. All the hybrids are the children of white men.

Critics say travellers always find what they are looking for—that they see in a place only what they take there. Hark to that, now! I would shirk the thought that I carry with me the fleshly mood I sensed and absorbed in these cities and in Chicago. But maybe I do; maybe I do. Or it may have been the wine and glamour of the southern sun that thronged my pulses with the fullness of life, and more life. And the music at the play can have a subtle power that is almost wicked. The thin cutting of the violins, the fugitive crooning of the oboe, the egotism of the trombone, the throbbing of the 'cello, with the voice of desire crying out and through them all, may lull into dreamy ecstacy even a wilding woodswoman who best knows the ghoulish quavers and hideous dissonance of the wolf's howl.

Someday, in the cities, they will reproduce the wolf-wail as a tonic for vitiated voluptuaries—this, and a piece of music that has in it the smoke of prairie fire. For my part, I think music is as dangerous as dynamite, and its rendition should be allowed only under certain conditions and restrictions. There is no tyranny so great as that of the baton. This fiddling fellow is far too frank and unashamed. With his facile fingers and a few stretched strings he tortures me so that I could cry aloud. I am the hopeless, helpless victim of his uncanny harmonies, caprice, whines,

and tremulous deliriums. He welts and sears my soul, distracts me with perplexed meanings, beats me down and drags me through slime and sordid places, all that he may, with one deep, sonorous, mellow wave, salve the whole black discord and float me close to a place that must be near to Eden.

I have no doubt that when Lucifer fell from heaven he took to fiddling.

XIX

Home Again

" Over the world and under the world,
And back at last to you."

IT is pleasant to wake up in a land where the trees grow wide instead of high, where backyard sanitation prevails, and where there are no shacks or barbed-wire fences. You do not appreciate the pastoral charm and serenities of the older provinces until you have lived in the North for five or six years. You did not know before that a house on every hundred acres was a friendly arrangement, and that there was something satisfying to the eyes in small fields, well cultivated. With no headlands or underbrush, the fields look as precise and tidy as stage scenery. Here and there one passes a solid stand of trees that have been thriftily husbanded for fuelling. Unlike the trees in the North, they do not fall when an opening is made in their ranks, but seem rather to bourgeon out into further girth and limb and foliage.

The maples are gorgeous in their uniforms of scarlet and gold. It is a suitable covering to the inward and spiritual sweetness of the tree. The elm tree is the most beautiful of all. I like the

way it adapts itself to nature, bending its intricate branches into the very streams. The rowan, with its chandeliers of red, looks like a new tree, it is so long since we saw one. There are no pines left, but, once in a long distance, you may see the stump of one, for fire does not consume it nor age wither.

Nearly all the " snake " or rail fences have been superseded by stones or boards, and, the fields being small, these fences are greatly in evidence. One of these fine days, when a herd law is put into effect in Ontario, they will get into step with the world-wide movement to abolish fences. Fences are relics of the days when wild animals prowled over the land. In Alberta, and farther north, we have the remains of a few high fences or stockades which the Hudson's Bay Company once erected to hold back the hostile Indians, just as the " wall of partition " in Jerusalem holds back the wailing Jews ; but the tendency of the times is to lower, or to remove entirely, the fence.

The intolerant male person who has accompanied me on this journey says Ontario is bound to be the exception, and backs up his assertion by calling my attention to the stubbornness of the people in retaining lightning-rods, although these are generally understood to be a direct menace to the buildings. And he draws attention to the hideous advertisement boards which have been set up on nearly every farm, blazoning forth in flaring letters of thirty feet the merits of somebody's

pain-killer, or the reliability of someone else's anti-bilious pills. He seems surprised that people continue to die in Ontario, when so many elixirs of life are retailed at twenty-five cents the bottle.

He says other unhandsome things for which I rush into apologia, but chiefly for his remark to the effect that the East is a good place to rear children, but not the best place to keep them when they are grown. This is why I pretend I am showing him the scenes and potentialities of Ontario with an eye on his bank account. Not for nothing do I live in the youngest province of North-West Canada.

"Cast your optics over these power stations that belt the land"—vigorous nudge at this point—"they carry light all the way from the Falls of Niagara. Yes, siree! in this bloomin' province we can manufacture light without fire, a performance that up-to-date has stumped Old Nick himself.

"Fine lookers, these farmers' wives at the station—might have stepped off a magazine-cover—tailor-made; fine mink stoles. See their curls! every one pinned on. Lots of money, nowadays, for the farmer's missus! These hay-foot, straw-foot fellows out West pay anything we ask for thoroughbred stock. Needn't be so particular about our horses—high and dry out West, and any broken-winded old stager catches his breath and fetches two hundred and fifty plunks."

My man looks sourly at me, and says he will

leave me at home the next time. He also pronounces me " a captious disputant," and says my talk is an excellent example of how much one can argue without proving anything. I do not dare exploit Ontario further, so fall into silence.

We stay off at Chatham. It is a city of nearly twelve thousand people, and is situated on the Thames River. In slavery days it was a haven for escaped negroes. One part of the city is called " Little Africa." Here the negroes reside, and here you hie should you need a maidservant, or a man to mow your lawn. Their labour is, however, of a vagrant quality. The girl stays with you until she can afford to move, and the man who gets the job does not work at all ; he farms it out to other negroes and takes the margin.

These blacks are people of many virtues and some glaring defects. I know whereof I speak, for I lived in Chatham once. The negro cook has a dire genius for music, and her relations have fearsome appetites. She works hard, but, like grandfather's clock, stops short in a most irrational and wicked way. Still, it is highly unreasonable to expect a cook to observe all the commandments and eschew the seven deadly sins for a paltry five dollars a week. I would not do it myself.

Once they had a negro councillor here. He was black as Boanerges, but good and wise. Still, the white citizens were uncivil to him, and some showed an undisguised rancour. This used to trouble me, and I spoke of it to the late Master

in Chancery. He was as gallant a gentleman as Galway ever produced, and I had the honourable satisfaction of his friendship. He agreed with me that this resentment arose from ignorance on the part of the whites. Precedent was against them.

"You must have heard tell, my child," he said, in a level voice, "that it pleased Caligula to make his horse a consul."

On the market-place I buy butternuts and hickory nuts from an old mulatto who used to work for us. Mammy's health, he tells me, is "tolerable" except for "misery in the head." He is a merry fellow, and the muscles of his neck are like those of a man who has strained on the tump-line. He remembers me quite well, and asks for "de Elder," meaning the Padre.

"Duz yo' mind, missy, how de Elder kep dis yer ole imp er de debbil down de well?

"Sezze, 'Jeremiah, what yo' charge to clean out de well?'

"Sezzi, 'Let dis yer nigger up till he don calkerlate.'

"Sezze, 'Jeremiah, yo' calkerlate down dar. I sho' nuff keep de ladder on top.'

"Huh! missy; bus' my ole head open, but dis yer nigger seed dat day wat de Lawd Jesus nebber seed.

"Jesso! missy, jesso! Dis yer nigger seed his equal, and de Lawd Jesus nebber seed dat."

Jeremiah is ragged exceedingly. His clothes look as if he had worn them his life long. These

are his stock in trade upon which he stakes his fortune—his make-up for the stage of life. It would be wholly useless, if not unkind, to present him with fine clothes. Rubbers, to a drake, are only luxuries that stultify his success as a swimmer. How could Jeremiah get "de lend ob a quataw" from the Missy if he had trousers that were entirely adequate, or if he were coat-collared up to the very eyes. How, indeed?

I do not know any other market in Ontario where one sees more varied commodities for sale than at Chatham. I poke around, and chaffer with the market women as though I would buy. I like the impetuosity of manner and graceful gesticulations of the French *femmes*, who have home-made cheese, silver honey in the wax, garden herbs, and yellow squashes to sell. They have cream, and rabbits, and celery, too, concerning which they babble to me in soft, sinuous vowels that are near to singing. Their manners are marked by *bonhomie*—that word for which, in English, we have no adequate expression.

Jeremiah.

The women who have come to Canada from the southern states of America sell hominy, and cured tobacco that is tied in twists and bundles. Other

women sell sauerkraut, russet apples, and sorghum, which is a thick brown syrup made from sweet corn.

Nearly all the farmers' wives have white beans to barter, for this is Kent County and beans are one of the staple products. In the days of Philemon the Cilician playwright, the farmers' wives feared to raise beans because they believed that if their hens ate of them they would cease laying eggs. You may depend upon it, some lazy, but ingenious, fellow who had to sort beans invented this story.

Turkeys are not sold by the pound on this market, but by their size. You may buy a bruiser for one dollar and fifty cents.

And such geese, too! cleaned and skewered, and decorated with tiny sprigs of spruce while, from their four quarters, giblets and livers peek out and fairly wink at the gourmand. It takes the women of Kent to dress a fowl. Ah! if they would only come to live in the province of Alberta. If they only would!

It is well to visit the old homes in Chatham, for their withdrawing-rooms are very pleasant. You may sit for hours beside low shelves of time-toned books, and revel in ancient editions of Young's "Night Thoughts," Lady Mary's "Letters," Pepys' "Diary" and other volumes of gentle birth and ill-spelling. They are not covered with glass but are literally at hand, as they should be. Or, if weary of books, you may study the old miniatures,

or grandpapa's portrait in oils. Grandpapa belonged to the 90th Regiment. His pose is one of magnificent nonchalance, for he does not care in the least whether you look at him.

There is a reliable solidity about this life in the older provinces that is mightily soothing, and which fills me with a kind of subconscious pleasure. The people seem to be untrammelled by considerations of time. This serenity probably arises from the fact that all the bearings of life are well oiled by dividends from substantial investments in unquestionable securities. The Padre says:

"Oh, yes! this will go on and on till sun and moon have died. Three months of it would bore you into a decline. Have you noticed that no one rides, that they drive phaetons, and 'g'lang' the horses?"

He is a master strategist, the Padre.

We visit several places along the way to Toronto. One of these is Ingersoll, an old-fashioned town on the river Thames. Its neighbourhood affords many beautiful vistas of a pastoral nature.

In nearly all the Ontario hotels, and those of Ingersoll are no exception, there are doors between the bedrooms. It is an odd-fangled style that has no stable reason to back it. If you ask the proprietor, he will tell you the door is for the convenience of families. But families seldom travel together and, if they did, they would not want their sons and daughters, or, for that matter, their mothers-in-law, trespassing on their prayers and

privacy. Albeit, this door arrangement may prove highly diverting to the occupant who lies quite still in bed. The talk of the commercial travellers on the other side of the door is often worth while. As soon as they turn out the lights and get pillows under their heads, these knights of the grip delight in telling all that is in their hearts. And you could never imagine the audacious things, and wicked, they keep there. Never!

I spent one morning in a church at Ingersoll, reading from the manuals of devotions. I would not be surprised if it kept me out of heaven. After diligently searching them in order to ascertain the exact number and nature of my sins, I knew myself to be a dog and a reprobate for whom there was no solace and little hope either in this world or the next. It was like reading the advertisements for patent medicines, which ask:

"Have you a tired feeling? Is your tongue coated? Is your breath short? Do you see floating specks? If you have all or any of these symptoms, your heart is diseased, and you are likely to die at any moment."

As I read over the specially prepared list of sins in the manuals, it was borne in on me that I had caught them all. I fairly groaned with guilt over the query:

"Have you professed any art, or undertaken any business, without sufficient skill or knowledge?"

I think of the time I undertook to write a book and of what the critics said of my "art"

and lack of "sufficient skill." I think long, long thoughts about it, and then, as directed by the manual, pray earnestly: "O Lord, be merciful unto me, a sinner."

There are only three rules to be observed about writing a book. (These I have found out for myself.) The first is not to write it, and the others are affirmations of this.

Another question amazes me vastly.

"Have you," it asks, "had a custom of swearing rashly and inconsiderately by way of imprecation upon yourself? How long have you had this custom? How many times a day have you sworn in this manner?"

Hitherto, in my besotted ignorance, when I knocked my head against the wall and called myself a blithering idiot, a long-tongued jade, and spitfire, I felt rather virtuous; but I shall never again so imprecate myself since I have learned, from the manuals, that this is a capital or deadly sin.

It is true that when I was confirmed our rector presented me with a little blue-bound book with questions in it, but they were terribly direct and nearly broke my heart. More than once I cried over its pages in sheer mortification, for criminals are always sensitive to short words.

"Are you a liar?" asked this awful inquisitor. "Are you a thief?"

Of course I was! Did I not write down that I had practised sixty minutes when I had frittered away at least half that time? Did I not, night

after night, tread warily down three flights of stairs to steal the remains of Miss Rose Elizabeth's supper off the library table? Indeed I did, and no doubt would have kept on stealing it had not someone beside me breathed heavily in the dark, so that I screamed aloud in terror. And to think it was only Fido after all!

But, as I said before, these were direct questions, and had not the searching subtlety of this manual I find in the Ingersoll pew. There is no escape from its probe and, some place or other, it is surely bound to touch a live nerve.

There are some interesting drives about Ingersoll. One of these is to the district of Embro. The farmers here will tell you that they won the tug-of-war at the World's Fair in Chicago. Also they will say the chief crop of the district is missionaries. On the wall of the Presbyterian Church they will show you a long list of preachers who have come from this Presbytery—Mackay of Formosa, and other men who have won world-wide fame. Also, they will tell you how one of their pastors once roused his sleepy hearers by calling out, "Wheat, a dollar a bushel!" just as Demosthenes cried "Marathon!" to some lethargic Athenians.

Another pleasant drive is to Thamesford. When last I drove on this road there was a toll to pay. I always wished to rush the gate, but never did so because of the mystic inscription above it: "Schedule of Tolls, 22 Vic., Chap. 49, Sec. 76."

I did not understand the words, and so I feared

them. It was a poor highway then. The road-menders used to dig clay out of the ditches and pile it on the grade, just as we do in the North. Nowadays it is well gravelled. It may be a comfort to some High Court judge or railway magnate to know that the piles of stones he " cricked " his back over in the seventies or eighties are a profitable source of revenue to the hired man who purchased the old homestead. He sells the stones by the cord to the municipal authorities, who grind them to gravel in the crushing machines to make a solid road-bed. And these stone piles are a fine and fortunate thing, in that they keep the road from becoming muddy or out of repair For this reason I call it " The Road of the Loving Heart," after that built by the Samoan chiefs in gratitude to Robert Louis Stevenson, and which they agreed to keep in good condition.

XX

Out to Ottawa

Kabul town's by Kabul river—
Blow the bugle, draw the sword.

—KIPLING

WE were in Ottawa on business till the very day the House opened, because Government officials, you may have noticed, will not be hurried. After a scurry, we secured two tickets for the gallery, but, although half an hour early, we found every available inch of space occupied. Passing down the stairway with a resigned-to-the-inevitable feeling, we encountered two gentlemen whom we knew. When they learned of our futile attempt, they turned us right about and said:

"Let us make a northern rush on the House."

Depend upon it, the true jewels of life are a Senator and a Cabinet Minister. We entered an elevator and went up and up till we could go no higher. Then we passed through an opening in the wall and went down multitudinous steps that were closed in, and which were suggestive of intrigues and hair-breadth escapes. (Most high adventures come to us in the by-ways of life.) Presently the door at the foot of the stairs opened,

and I gasped to find myself inside the line of guards and immediately in front of the Senate Chamber, with His Majestic Blackness of the Rod looking untellable things at me. The Cabinet Minister whispered to Black Rod, but that august person was as immovable and unimpressionable as a flagstaff, and shook his head. What he said was, "The lady is not in full dress," a fact patent to the most casual observer. And he pronounced "lady" with a slightly ascending accent, just as if one could not possibly be a lady who did not go *décolleté* to breakfast. (Poor dear! As if the honourable but highly elastic title of lady did not apply, nowadays, to any woman who uses a handkerchief and keeps off the street while intoxicated.) Then, the Cabineteer and Senator whispered to Black Rod, but I couldn't tell you what they said, in that it was a most prodigious and mendacious bluff. In the end—with warnings that it must never occur again—I, even I, an ignoble plough-pusher and coal-heaver from the last outpost of Empire, gained admittance to the sacred presence of His Majesty's representative, winning, at the same time, the distinction of being the first woman to hold a seat on the floor of the Senate Chamber in a street suit.

I left my hat at the door, where the Padre indecorously hid it under a bench, and followed his Regal Blackness into the Presence. I made pretence he was my own particular usher, and held up my head as if it never bore anything more

ordinary than three feathers and a tiara, but, in reality, I was greatly frightened.

The lady beside me said: "My dear! *how did* you manage it?" to which I whispered, "*Just* arrived!" and if she chose to take me up incorrectly, I am not to be blamed.

With all its attendant pride, pomp, and circumstance, and with its splendidly groomed and plumed women, this opening of the House at the capital was truly a beautiful scene. It would have been wholly satisfying had there been an orchestra to play symphonies for us.

I liked to watch Him of the Black Rod in his procession of one. He moved backward and sideward in the same way as a lobster. His is not a sane method of progression, but it has been so ordained somewhere or somehow. Besides, anything that is wholly rational is wearisome.

As he waits for the honourable members to be admitted, His Excellency Earl Grey sits on his throne with great self-possession. He does not blink an eye, yet there is nothing or nobody he does not see. He is a diplomat, trained to his very heels, and allows nothing to go by default. He never shows that he is bored, and I think he seldom is, for he has the inquiring disposition and sympathetic sense that tend to keep a man young both in heart and mind. No Governor-General in Canada has been more beloved or more deservedly popular.

Her Excellency, who has the most beautiful

face in the House, does not sit beside her husband, for the Governor-General's wife has no official status. She sits at the end of the front row of seats, directly facing the wife of the Prime Minister. When Her Royal Highness Princess Louise was the wife of our Governor-General she occupied a chair beside the throne by reason of her royal birth. She took this chair to England with her when she returned.

In the entrance hall of the Parliament buildings the Canadian coat of arms is wrought in the stone of the floor, with the shields of all the provinces as a halo, excepting only the shields of Alberta and Saskatchewan. It may be that these eastern legislators feel that our northern provinces belong, in reality, to the United States owing to the so-called "American invasion," but this is quite a mistake. The buildings are of red and grey stone, and of the style Italian-Gothic. They are indigenous—that is, they grow out of the scene, or rather fit into it, just as a log house does in the woods. Still it does not require acute perception to see that Canada has outgrown these buildings and that, before many years, changes or additions will have to be made. Mayhap, by that time Great Britain will have decided to make the Anglo-Saxon race predominant for the coming centuries by moving the Capital of the Empire from England to Canada. The results of such a change would be so far-reaching and stupendous that the most sagacious statesman could hardly

grasp them. Standing before the heroic statue of Sir John A. Macdonald—old "Union Jack"—who welded this vast Dominion from ocean to ocean into one magnificent and harmonious confederation, I bow me and pray the God of Nations that this thing may be.

It is good to be here these pleasant autumn days, just to look off beyond the cliffs to the Chaudière Falls, where the Ottawa and Rideau Rivers are confluent. It is over a century ago that Philemon Wright, the first settler, made his lonely portage round the Chaudière Falls and settled in what is now the suburban town of Hull. About 1820, this Wright deeded his claim to one Sparks, a teamster, in cancellation of a debt of two hundred dollars. The town which grew up opposite Hull was first known as By Town, in honour of Colonel By, the engineer who made its survey. Ultimately, its name was changed to Ottawa, a fact which gave rise to Nicholas Flood Davin's bon mot that the city from being "By Town" was changed to "Out-a-way," a witticism which greatly delighted the conflicting cities which had made struggle to be the official capital of the Dominion.

Also, it is good to potter around and talk to the Government gardeners who are defacing the scarlet geraniums which, in the spring, they painted on the black clay. Already they are talking of next year's flowers, and of what marvels they are going to accomplish. I rather like the

men who babble and boast about their work. It is a way the birds have. One of these gardeners has been here these many years. He gives me to understand that the Reform Party are the antiseptic element of Canada, and if they did not hold the reins of political beadledom the country would straightway go to the dogs. The masculine head

"It is over a century ago that Philemon Wright . . . made his lonely portage round the Chaudière Falls."

of our family has this same restricted viewpoint, but we no longer argue about it, for, on these occasions, he becomes distinctly perturbed and dips his mucilage brush into the ink bottle.

The most imposing statue on Parliament Hill is that of Queen Victoria, erected by the Dominion to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of Her

Majesty's accession. I know this statue is good art, for it causes me to stand very erect and to feel myself equal to high and splendid braveries.

On the boulevard in front of the buildings I look long at the Sir Galahad monument erected by the public that they might not forget the heroism and death of the youth Henry Albert Harper. I look at it and think thoughts that go back to the days when "Bert" Harper and I played at "wild horses" and "keeping house" in the little country village where both of us were born. It was years and years ago, but it might only have been yesterday.

XXI

Some Ontario Ways

Saw many I loved in the street or ferry-boat or public assembly, yet never told them a word.

—WALT WHITMAN

SOME people achieve happiness, and some just live, in Toronto. It is a town with temperament. Heaven stoops very near to the earth here and, if it were not for the coal smoke, you could almost see in.

Long ago—that is, about eight years ago—there was a famine in hard coal caused by the Pennsylvania miners going out on strike, and the manufacturers in Toronto were forced to use soft coal. Its cheapness was a recommendation, so its use was continued. What the strike has cost, and will continue to cost, the city in depreciation of its buildings through corrosion from the grimy smoke, by extra sums spent in sanitation and in street- and window-cleaning—to say nothing of laundry bills and toilet soap—is incalculable. In my summary I have forgotten to include the cost of electric light. The houses are not necessarily lit from the windows except for a few hours at midday. This must be a very considerable ex-

pense for, in Toronto, all the public utilities are in the hands of private corporations.

I can remember when it was always daylight after the matinée, but in these times you emerge from the theatre into arc-lighted streets. The change has come about so gradually that the citizens have not noticed it, but the exile who comes back is at once impressed. As the Toronto people are sensitive, instead of sensible, on this subject, I may as well acknowledge that the contrast between North and South has possibly emphasised the atmospheric differences. Coming from a boreal land of fierce sunshine, raw cobalts, scarlet and blood-red, a land where even the moonlights are of sharp silver intensity, my eyes are, as a consequence, strung to higher lights.

And coming from a more sparsely peopled place where our " devil-strips " are almost as wide as these southern streets, my nerves snap from fear and excitement. The Padre says it's not necessary for me to jump like " a scorched cat," for everyone can see at a glance, by the cut of my coat, that I come from the country. There is one consolation in the horrifying celerity of these motor-cars and snarling trolleys: they prevent a woman from meditating on her besetting sins, a folly which I am not infrequently forced to practise.

Yet there is something perversely desirable about a motor-car. Apart from its comfort and roominess, there is a charm in the subtle purr of its thick wheels on the stone pavement. It is true

you may hear the same thickish sound when the ploughshare pulls through the sod, or in the underbrush where an animal gluts on its prey, but it is well to forget these sounds in the city. At night, as the motor carriages pass under the light, from darkness to darkness, they seem uncommunicative, taciturn, hag-steered. One could easily make romances concerning them. And, sometimes, they only look like great dragon-flies with monstrous, curious eyes.

There is one other thing you can hear of nights, when you lie awake and give ear to the sounds in the streets beneath. The horses have a shorter trot than they should have. Their hoofs pelt the pavement like hailstones. You never hear the long, reaching trot of the North, or the fine, measured roll of the single-footer. The distinction is mightily distracting, till you look down from the window. You might have known they minced like that to prevent their slipping on the icy pavement.

The street cars are always crowded. An old lady once gave me an apple stuck full of cloves. This is how the street cars look with people. When the conductor is not saying "Fez pliz" he is ordering his inconsequential pieces of freight to "move up," which is only his polite way of saying: "Step on her toes"; "Knock off her hat"; or "Gouge out her eyes." And you may never say to the conductor—not even apologetically—"You have carried me past my street," for, if you dare, as likely as not he will reply: "Well,

ma'am, I didn't hold you on." Yes, he will say it, and wink at the back vestibule, whereupon they will all laugh. Let this stand for a sober fact.

In Toronto, as in all Ontario, they still cling to the telephone system that has a central. If central answers you—she sometimes does—you may get into communication with your friends, but it is not well to count too much on this, for her position is unassailable and she can treat you with a scorn that is wholly untranslatable. It is best, however, not to use the telephone, for in time you are bound to lapse into boorish incivility, to say nothing of becoming highly bilious.

It is not wise or, for that matter, necessary to tell the people down here that you come from the North-West. This applies more particularly to women. In less than five minutes, their air will have taken on just a suggestion of superiority. In the end, without their having put it in so many words, you will have inferred that they are sorry for you and think you very funny. If a woman should go so far as to pronounce you " so Western," you are, of a certainty, hopeless and undone. Being interpreted, this means you are homespun, commonplace, perhaps gross. I have seen Londoners take this same pose towards " the country," by which term they designate all the rest of England. Ah, well! turn about is fair play. Secretly, in the underbrush of my mind, I have been pitying them, for, with a few exceptions whom it would be safer not to name, these urban

folk have forgotten how to laugh out of a clear sky at next to nothing.

If it were not for these inconsequential drags, Toronto, as I said before, would almost touch heaven. And, after all, the citizens may prefer it should not; there is such a reliable solidity about the earth.

It is good to potter around the old haunts again. The same heartsome-faced girl is selling stamps at the post office. I do not so much as know her name, but I have promised, if she comes north, to promote a marriage for her. She seemed fastidious in her ideals, just as if the man mattered, except as a means to the end, there being really no such a thing as an ideal man. I read this once in a book an Italian wrote, but I forget his name.

It hurt when they told me in the old Public Library that Dr. Bain was dead. He was a man of fine fibre, this Bain, and a born antiquarian. His shoulders were rounded; it may have been from poring over books, but I always suspected he had wings. In person, Dr. Bain looked like the late Dr. Richard Garnett, Keeper of Printed Books at the British Museum—except that his face was thinner—and he had the same unwavering patience with the plodding student in search of data. Both were men of ripe scholarship, but you can never tell what these bookworms are conning in their heads, for Dr. Garnett, whom you inevitably associated with title-pages, colophons, block-printing, and Syriac fragments, once wrote a book

entitled "De Flagello Myrteo," which is a volume of quaint and freakish fancies on love.

It is claimed that the reading room in the Toronto Public Library is the finest on the continent. Someday an adventurous librarian will successfully urge upon the Board of Management the fitness of dedicating such a room to Fanny Burney, who, among her other distinctions, has the honour of inaugurating the circulating library, without which, to-day, no town can lay claim to culture or completeness.

The dress of the Toronto women is a cross between the English and American modes, by which I mean that the gowns are of good material and in good style. But even if the gowns be only of coarse serge, they are apotheosised by buttons, a touch of gold on the collar, and genius. These are what you call "built." This season, the tailors make the women's waists extend to their ankles. This prodigious attenuation does not really make any difference, except that it must be odd to have your feet fastened to your waist. The wearer may not walk either. Her movements are restricted to spinning.

Judging from the jewellers' shops, Toronto must be either very wealthy or very extravagant. The heaped-up stones displayed in the windows would almost buy a city. I never weary looking at these gems—these unwithering blooms of the rocks and sea—and often they lure me into the slippery paths of covetousness. Properly speaking,

diamonds are as useless as tears of joy, a pearl is of no more profit than the dimple in a baby's cheek, or a ruby than the laughing lips of a girl; yet the tears, the dimples, and the laughter may be of more value than all the kingdoms of earth and the riches thereof. In one of the shops there is a beautiful necklace of whole pearls which, someday, I shall very certainly steal. No one will think of looking under my blouse-collar for it.

Toronto is a city where they keep to the side-walks and the saints'-days, and where the business is said to be sound. It has a staid, well-to-do respectability, yet these folk are more given to sport than we of the North. You can tell it by their talk. In the North, we have "an axe to grind," "get up steam," "hoe our row," "dish up," "pan out," "get a cinch," or engage in some other manual exercise, but here, in Toronto, the similes concern sport. They "toe the mark," "make a bull's eye," "stand pat," or "play the game." They catch an opportunity "on the fly," or "off the bat." A man is not "side-tracked" in the South; he is "off his base," or his action is not "according to Hoyle." They know how to keep the members of the hockey and baseball leagues from attempting to kill each other, and the North has grown grey hairs over this very problem. When two hot-hearted, fat-fed teams like our "Esquimaux" of Edmonton and our "Cow-punchers" of Calgary meet on the ice or on the green, there is almost sure to be war to the

knife and fork. What else could you expect of men who live and play in a dry, bracing atmosphere at an altitude of nearly three thousand feet? By the nature of things, their veins must be carriers of electricity rather than of blood.

Toronto takes its new jokes from the theatres, just as we do under the aurora borealis. Not a few of the jokes are winkingly wicked—that is, the words are as innocent as the story of the Babes in the Wood, but the tacit inferences are audaciously naughty. I know this because I go to the vaudeville quite often myself. A wisp of a girl who, with her yellow hair and green dress, looks like the incarnation of a daffodil, will sing a song with a point so tangible that it penetrates to the utmost corners of the room with deadly effect. The greater the ingenuousness of the daffodil, the deeper the delight of the audience. Personally, I have more sympathy with the country "Rube" than any other character on the vaudeville stage. I never weary of his long whiskers, his high-water "pants," and his carpet bag. Variety is not the spice of life so much as sameness. I wish he would always go on telling about "our cows," and "Mariar," and "the widder-lady what was friendly-like on the train." But the new Rube who goes to the city to have a "bust" on $1.73 has rust-red hair and a clean-shaven face. He wears white trousers, aggressively turned up, and yellow shoes with flaring bows. He still hitches his trousers and counts his money, but

he has grown worldly-wise, and tells the city girls, with a guileless air, about a country jay called Rockefeller, "what went up to the city and got took in." The policeman no longer gathers him in, nor does the gold-brick man clean him out. According to the latest mode, he disappears off the stage doing marvellously high kicks, hand in hand with a lithesome lady whose stockings look very long and very black silhouetted against her billows of white lingerie.

The jugglers and acrobats are doing more wonderful things all the time. A man throwing hay on a load may display agility and grace and a fine poise; a man rolling a log up a spiked incline by the aid of a cant-hook, may be trim, mettlesome, and decisive, but for supple-sinewed grace and super-excellent shapeliness commend

"I never weary of his long whiskers, his high-water 'pants,' and his carpet bag."

me to the jugglers. One clumsy movement and the whirling knives would fall plumb in the eye or clear through the skull.

And who, for a moment, wants to grow so blasé as to believe the agile acrobat only fails three or four times in order to interest the audience before his culminating act? You might as well say the horses race merely to excite the betting-ring. I think these jugglers and acrobats do their best; but it is not clear to me why they fail to turn their abilities into the domain of politics—the hours are much shorter and the remuneration so large and sure. The proper sphere for such clever prestidigitation would seem to be at the Exchequer.

It is a sharp step from the theatre to the church, and yet not so sharp after all. In both you may be sad, glad, good, or bad. Also, you may be amused. I said this to the Padre as we walked through the cathedral, but he drew himself up, as if he were made of Bessemer steel, and spoke some things straight to the pith of the matter. It was awful to know I was so wicked, and good to know there is no Bradstreet about souls. Huh! I have decided never to tell him my thoughts again. His mind is quite impermeable by an idea.

Not having seen a stained-glass saint for six years, they come to me with the interest of a discovery. They are distinctly amusing, no matter what the Padre says. Only those who are suffering

from spiritual astigmatism could see anything devotional in the contemplation of a rickety angel with green hair. How could a worshipper be anything but highly nervous when every angel's clothes show such a peculiar and marked tendency to fall off? It is true that this style of drapery may be seen in the work of the old masters, but we ought to do better things in these latter days. The pupil *should* be greater than his master.

In spite of the pugnacious bulge over the ears attributed to him in the windows, I will stick to it till I die that St. Peter was good-looking. Luke, the physician, may be portrayed with an eye-disease that would debar him as a Canadian immigrant; John the Baptist may suffer from pernicious anæmia; the Roman soldiers may be unmoral villains with brawny arms and legs; but Peter, I am confident, was no gross, loutish fellow, but a man of parts—a well set up, handsome man, not unlike Phillips Brooks. He must have been, for once Cornelius, a captain of soldiers, was so struck with Peter's appearance that he fell down at his feet and worshipped him for a god. And, if you paid attention while the chapter was read after breakfast, you will remember how Peter said to the soldier:

"Stand up; I myself also am a man."

The tower on the cathedral is the highest thing Toronto has ever built. I went to the top of it to please the Padre; I came down well pleased with myself. Off to the south, the broad, dancing

waters of the bay spread out like a vast prairie on which the snow is melting, come April. Plumb below the tower, King Street is a sooty cañon much perplexed by a tangle of wires. Manikins strut up and down its bed in an endless procession. I used to strut here, too, when I wore two brown braids and a sailor hat. It is a male street now —just as Yonge Street is female.

To the north lies the division known as Rosedale—a marvellously beautiful place, half city and half country. Here, on the brink of gulches where the trees come close together and whisper, and where odorous things cling and blossom, the wealthy-wise have built them shining palaces that look like beautiful dreams charmed into stone.

Wherever I look, the city is very fair and worthy to be greatly loved. I, who have longed to come home once more, keep saying over and over to myself, "Toronto Town" and "Old Ontario," just to feel the roll of the words on my tongue. It may be at this tower-top my spirit has been opened out by the immensity of the sky, so that I cannot look down over the city without a great yearning for its health and welfare. It may be this; I do not know, only that I seem to understand these home-folk and the ruffled concerns of their lives—the tired men with the reek of toil on them; the small, wild Bedouins of the streets calling the latest editions; the woman mourning for her mate lying under a white sheet; the financier in difficulty, with thoughts pricking his brain like thin, hot

needles; the prowling harlot whom life burns up like dry wood.

And below, in this home-city of mine, there are places that I yearn over like a wistful mother—the attic room where a journalist spurs on his fagged wits because the rent is overdue; the stately room with a little child hiding his head in the pillow from the maunder of the wind in the fretted trees; the dirty alleyways where men with hot and greedy senses skulk and shamble of nights—these, and the hospital wards distraught with misery and moans, where women cry at night and wake at dawn to cry the more, and where hopeless men drag out weary days waiting for death.

Oh! but it is a fair city this Toronto, resourceful, tireless, and unafraid; but here, in my watch-tower over the chimes, I think on its hurts and long greatly to heal them. It may be, too, the high gods will hear this as a prayer, for, after all, prayer is only the summary of an intense desire.

XXII

Apple Harvest

Tyndaris, come and visit my farm. . . . Here you will find rural abundance, with full horn, repose, music, and revelry without rest.

HORACE, Ode xvii. (Book I.).

ALL the warm, dark night the odour of apples comes to me through the open window. In the morning I step on the balcony and pluck them from their green setting. They are too beautiful to eat, and too luscious not to. These palate-weary Southerners fail to appreciate the kindly fruits of the earth as do we of the North.

And I sit on a three-legged stool and eat apples while the girls and men are milking the cows. The purr of the milk into the pails is soothing to one's nerves. It is a homely, placid sound. I have tried to milk several times, but my efforts have been a shining failure. My lord and master says I can never hope to succeed in that the prime qualification for a milkmaid is unsophistication. For my part, I don't think milkmaids are ingenuous, and I am quite sure milkmen are not.

The little black Jersey has wanton heels, and lashes out fiercely just as if she had taken to drinking. The cloven hoof, I can tell you, is no

inconsequential weapon of offence. Charlie, the hired man, says a lot of things to her that he should not, and he literally takes the cow by the horns and ties them up to a beam to prevent her kicking. Poor beastie! She reminds me of my pea-vines when the Padre has stretched their necks with a string. When her head is released, I feed her with my last apple. She is highly responsive, and seems the very pattern of docility. Indeed, cows are usually sensible and good-natured.

Years ago, when a little girl, I visited this farm, and helped skim the cream from the tiers of tins in which the milk was "set." Times have changed, and the cream-separator now does the work. It is more effectual, but less diverting.

During milking time I make the acquaintance of the farm collie, who has brought in the cows. When the Jersey kicked, he tore round and

"The purr of the milk into the pails is soothing to one's nerves."

barked with insane concern, as though it were a personal insult to himself. Adeline, the eldest daughter of the household, tells me that collie bit a peddling gipsy last week. The man was very angry, but she declares he was a hail-fellow-well-bit.

After breakfast I help to cull apples in the orchard—Snows and Northern Spies and salmon-fleshed Greenings. The Old Sir tells me it does not pay to sell apples, as the buyers give only one dollar a barrel for the highest grades. Then the orchardist must haul the barrels from town, haul them back to the station, and board the pickers. It is, he says, more lucrative to let the hogs and turkeys eat the fruit, for hogs bring nine cents a pound—live weight—and turkeys twenty. No wonder the Ontario bacon that has been fattened on beech-nuts and apples has a flavour vastly superior to the Northern product.

I have had to beat the turkey-gobbler off my apple pile several times this morning, for he refuses to be "shooed." He is an irascible biped, and gobbles alarmingly at me. I throw apples at him, and he shakes his wattles with rage. I make believe I am Eve throwing apples at the serpent. Betsy, who is a Barnardo girl, and bow-legged, tells me he only thinks I have wheat for him. Old Sir calls him "Bubbly Jock," and says he has heard that turkeys speak in Hebrew. He is a stately-stepping, self-applauding fellow, this gobbler, and struts among his young sons and

daughters as much as to say: "Marriage is no failure."

We carry the apples we have culled into the cellar, where there are huge bins of fruit and vegetables, shelves of bread and cake, tubs of butter, firkins of pickled meat, rows of jelly and preserves, and red and green sauces. This cellar is filled to the very eyes with food.

Old Madam gives me a pear to eat that must weigh a pound. She planted the tree four years ago. Old Madam is seventy-two, but she keeps on planting trees. Although she talks much of her ailments, she has an abiding spirit of youth which bids fair to keep her alive for another score of years. It is my opinion longevity is more dependent upon morning-heartedness than upon diet or regularity.

I find a bat on a rafter and beat it off. There is a malign look about this hapless hybrid. Once she was a woman, and her name was Alcathoe. Because she ridiculed the orgies of Bacchus she was changed into a bat, and the spindle and yarn with which she worked were turned into a vine and ivy. Adeline wholly discredits this story of Ovid's, for she is a member of the Church Temperance Society. It would seem, however, that there is circumstantial evidence to support it, for the bat suckles its young—a distinction wholly unique in a thing that flies.

Adeline also belongs to a Missionary Society which sends clothes up to the people in the North.

I cannot find it in my heart to tell her that Northerners need leather portmanteaux and trunks rather than flannel petticoats and cast-off coats, for these good women, out of the fullness of their hearts, take a pleasure in packing bales for us. Besides, it gives them a chance to meet fortnightly and drink tea. For this reason, the sewing society is a greater benefit to the province of Ontario than to the province of Alberta.

I spend most of my time with Old Madam. I hold her skein of yarn on my arms while she winds it up. I pretend I am holding my life, and that this blinking, withered grandame is Destiny. She starts the ball on her two fingers, and then slips it off and winds the opposite way. Presently, it assumes a contour, but the yarn seldom runs long in one direction. She keeps turning the ball over and over. At first, the yarn winds easily, and then it tangles. She puts the ball in and out, and up and through, but the snarl is stubborn. She is going to break the thread, but I pray her to be patient. She does not dream the stake at issue; and when the yarn runs clear and smooth, I sing a song of life and hope, and of a love that never dies.

It was a foolish lilt that made me forget about Destiny, and when the hideous, iron pot surged its boiling sweets over the stove, I threw my life to the floor—threw it witlessly, with my own hands. Truly I was dismayed and confounded.

While she knits, Old Madam tells me stories

about fray-kirtled trolls, and about the banshees in Ireland. She has never heard the wail of a banshee, for she was very young when she came to Canada, but her mother has often heard it. And she tells me of a wicked spirit, who lives in Ireland, who can change into any shape. If a mother sees him before her baby is born it will have a hare-lip or club-feet. This spirit steals the wits of children, so that they dribble and their tongues loll out.

And I tell her the story about the Knights of the Table Round, and of Merlin and Vivien, and of Sir Galahad and his white armour. She does not care for the tale of King Arthur and Guinevere. She cannot understand the queen being left in the cloisters. The course of true love, she admits, may be troublous and rough, but it must always end smoothly. She likes detective stories best, and vignettes of people who live in high circles, their characters and their modes of life. Her heroes must always be fair, and her villains dark—any other complexion upsets her equanimity and sense of propriety.

And I read her poems from the volume of Yeats which I bought last week in Toronto. She likes best the one entitled " The Fiddler of Dooney," and has had me re-read it to each member of the household, while she sits by and listens. The conception of the Irish folk in heaven who dance to the fiddle " like a wave of the sea " seems to have wholly captured her fancy. And here let

it stand forth that this conception is by no means wildly improbable.

Old Madam sets me to herd her chickens when she lets them out of the coops. I like this better than copying, for copying is dog's work. This last few days a hawk has been fluttering the hens, and has carried off two chickens. He is an ill-boding bird, a rapacious filcher, who sags and sweeps near the earth. If I moved away, this Herr Hawk would fall on his prey in a straight line, as though he were dropped from a plummet. Ho! ho! Herr Hawk; I know your traits and tricks. I have seen you fall in the Northland, and have heard your cry that is most like the twang of a broken string.

Some of Old Madam's chickens have a disease in their feathers. They are skinny, dishevelled, half-moulted things, and look positively impish. The roosters want to fight each other all the time. There does not seem to be any bone of contention for this unappeasable quarrel, except that they are game birds and answer to the call of buried blood. When they come to a deadlock, I seek peace and ensue it with a stick, a stone, or a clod. Old Sir intends to have them dehorned to prevent their fighting; that is, he will cut off their spurs within half an inch of the leg, and put powdered chalk on to prevent bleeding; also, he will trim down their beaks till the blood shows close to the cut.

I don't like the rooster. He is false-hearted, and has an unsavoury repute. When you say a

person has the morals of a chanticleer, you leave yourself open for a libel charge. The rooster is a ridiculous lackwit who praises the grey, motherly hens, but follows hard after the gay-coloured ones who ruffle their feathers and mince. He has been observing the world of men, you would think.

After supper in the big kitchen, there is healthy talk around the fire. The men-folk have gathered in to rest and chat. Old Sir is making a broom-head of birch. He will attach a long pole, and use it to clean the chimneys. The birch stick is about eight inches long, and he peels it down to one. He "minds the time" when this was the only broom he knew hereabout. Blue-beech and iron-wood were also made into brooms. Old Sir has lived on this farm for over seventy years. It used to belong to his father. He is a big man physically, with a moral and mental stature to correspond. In the world of affairs he would have made a mark. He has five sons. To two of them he has given farms, and university educations to the other three. All his girls have been educated in the city and, strange to relate, have remained unspoiled.

I question him about the materia medica of the pioneers. The common cat-tail, he tells me, was used to poultice sores. The bruised leaves and stems of golden-rod rubbed on skin which had been poisoned by ivy was a certain cure. The great panacea, though, seemed to be the mullein plant. Assuredly, it deserves its prettier name of

"Aaron's rod." An ointment was made by boiling its leaves in hot lard after having first moistened them in hot water. Soaked in hot water they also made an excellent poultice. If used as tobacco they proved leaves of healing to all throat irritations. They had to be gathered before the plant flowered.

The men talk of the cost of threshing, and of how the automobiles abrade the nerves of their horses. The motor-car has become the black devil of the country folk. Joe Strong has an automobile; but why he has, or how he came to have it, no one knows—Joe being only the municipal clerk. There is a rumour rife that he has mortgaged his life insurance, it being shortly due on the endowment plan.

One of the hired men tells us he has decided to go West. He does not seem to have any definite plans mapped out, or any particular reason for going, except "the luck of the things beyond." But this has ever been the lure that has led men to trek to the North and West in long and lustful lines. This man ought to succeed, if vitality counts. He has the reddest hair I have ever seen off a poster.

The men asked me about the Dukhobors in the North who went to find Jesus, and they made merry at their expense. I was not pleased for, indeed, you must seek for Jesus if you would find him. We are so commercialised we cannot, any more, understand simple-minded folk, although our

literary and university men write reams on the knight who went forth to seek the Holy Grail. I own it would have been just as well if the Dukhobors had not discarded their clothing on two occasions, but so long as we portray the three Graces in the nude, on the assumption that kindness and sincerity have no covering, there is just a shadow of defence for these Russian refugees.

We talked also of the proposed Canadian navy, crop rotation, and the close-fisted policy of the cattle buyer who looked at the heifers to-day. The company is not unanimous as to the advisability of the Canadian navy, and the dispute waxes warm. One of the sons is a captain of militia, and believes in both the tax of money and the tax of blood for the upkeep of ships and armaments. The Old Sir says Canada should attend strictly to her own business, which is that of agriculture; that our concern should be with the pruning-hook rather than with the sword. Others have thought this way. It is nearly three centuries since Sully said the salvation of France lay in the plough and the cow.

XXIII

An Old Farm

Do not, Leuconoe, consult the astrologers. It is better to enjoy the present and allow the future to take care of itself.

—HORACE, Ode xi. (Book I.)

I WENT one morning to visit the gipsies who are stationed down by the "back hundred." Old Madam was afraid I would be murdered, so I had to slip away without telling her. Murder, she believes, would be a very decent impulse for these gipsies. It appears that a law exists whereby gipsies may be deported from Ontario, but this company have been here so long that the law does not affect them. I smelled burning feathers as I approached. It would seem that other maurauders are busy besides Herr Hawk, but I shall not tell Old Madam.

And why not help themselves to an occasional chicken? All well-informed people are aware it is no sin for gipsies to steal, because they stole one of the four nails whereby Jesus was nailed to the Cross, so that there was only one nail for His feet. I heard this years and years ago. And what odds about their poverty? A tinkler gipsy once wrote of his married life:

"This woman and I, though we came together as poor as might be—not having so much household stuff as a dish or spoon betwixt us both—yet she had for her part 'The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven' and 'The Practise of Piety,' which her father had left her when he died."

The gipsy's name was Bunyan.

When I got within hailing distance, a young woman came out to meet me. She was a keen-mannered woman with quick, ferret-like eyes. Her dress was untidy, but æsthetically so. She wore a dark skirt, a scarlet bodice, and a vari-coloured head-shawl with soft, silken fringe.

"Does the mees want her fortune told? Tell the mees goot fortune!"

The mees did, but she wanted it told beside the fire where an old woman, as thin as daylight, held a baby that was sick and fretful. Two children hid themselves under the wagon like young chickens in a grain stook. They peered at me, but would not be coaxed by lumps of sugar, although the grandame bade them come out. She had a tin-kettleish voice, and was surely a stage crone. Old and small was she, like the sere, brown leaves in autumn. Someday a sharp blast will blow her away.

I threw the younglings the sugar in bits, and soon we were on pitch-and-catch terms, but I could get no further.

The young woman told me all things that ever I did. And also, with a freakish talent, she read

the lines in my hand as I had heard them read before. And she said:

"Mees study book. Big, big wrong. Mees kill strong power. Mees, what you say—ah, yes! —mees clairvoyante—much clairvoyante!"

Hark to that, now! I knew someone would find out "a strong power" in me someday, even if only a questionable one.

I am to have two husbands—apparently simultaneously—and she says I am to be buried standing up. I wonder what this means. Perhaps, like rare Ben Jonson, the king may give me eighteen inches square in Westminster Abbey—and, again, he may not. Or, it may be I shall be buried at sea where, with a weight at my feet, I must perforce stand upright.

And this "tinkler hizzie" told me other things which, hitherto, my stiff-necked, purblind relatives have failed to discover in me, and to which I must draw their immediate attention. I liked her beguiling talk. Heigho! but it is very good to be a fool.

The sun, this morning, pours a flood of light, like a ceremonial libation, over the "back hundred." Close by, John Henry—called "Jonery" for short —is ploughing long furrows. The earth odour is strangely vivifying. In some way or other, one's senses seem to transmute it in the alembic of the mind. Jonery lets me plough a little, although he declares I will not find it a rest-cure. He says that a handkerchief does not look well on the

plough-handle, and that you are apt to hurt your spine walking with one foot in the furrow and one on the sod. And he tells me droll things about his horses and their characteristics. The "Bill" horse will do nothing but walk. He is too much of a lady to trot.

The air is full of cheery good-byes from the birds southward bound. The wild geese are strong on the wing; their flight is almost majestic, and they sail high. Although geese are proverbially foolish, the wild ones are wise enough to know that on the ground they are prosaic and stiff-mannered; like the gods—mean only when they come to earth.

"We play at peek-a-boo around the bole."

A chipmunk is chit-chittering in the beech tree. I lure him down, and we play at peek-a-boo around the bole. He is a pert fellow but withal engaging—the only comedian on the farm.

In the woods, two men are lopping the branches off a huge ironwood tree, which they tell me is

to be used for a ship-mast. Old Sir is selling his tallest, strongest trees to a Montreal firm, who ship them to England. He has watched these trees grow from saplings, and now sees them cut. I wonder what he thinks as he marks each one for death. Perhaps he thinks sad thoughts, or, maybe, pleasant ones about reaping. Who can say ?

The trees in the woods are almost bare, and in the open spaces the leaves dance until they wear themselves to death. Dizzy-headed things they are. A red leaf-boy chases a gold leaf-girl over the mould and out on to the ploughlands, while the old brown chaperones gossip and nod in the fence corners.

The cedars in this wood are royally skirted. They throw their limbs out horizontally into green floors, and, so far as your petticoats permit, you may climb from room to room. They are veritable castles in the air.

Here one may loaf in a lazily contented fashion without feeling oneself to be a jarring note in the theme of things. Here, too, one may cut things deep in the bark and wonder at the proneness of all people to carve, especially if they be in love. This was the favourite pastime of Goethe's, who even wrote a poem about Kätchen's initials, and of how the sap had flowed from her initials over his, thus suggesting to him with sudden force his rudeness, which had so often caused her to shed tears. He could never read the poem without

emotion, but this did not prevent his cutting other initials on other trees.

It may be that Düntzer, his biographer—Düntzer the apologetic, the incomparable—was nearly right when he said Goethe always needed a number of feminine hearts of more or less personal interest to him in which to mirror himself. But, after all, this might be said of most men.

When I tell the Padre this evening what the gipsy girl said, he pretends to drop down dead. He says fortune-telling is a vagabond art; that gipsies are truckling adventurers, and that I am grievously green. Just as if that mattered! Now, if he had called me drab I should have suffered much mortification, but green is the colour of the leaves in spring; green is in the rainbow; hopes are green, and green is the colour of the poet's laurel. And how is one to see the fairies unless one wears a bit of green? Just riddle me that!

I tell him this, but he says green is not a fast colour. He further declares I have been "buncoed" and, assuming an air of pitying superiority which irks me inexpressibly, he says:

"Bunco, my dear girl, has been properly defined by a man of experience as the art of disseminating knowledge in the rural districts."

But Old Madam does not agree with him in the least, and I can see she is sorry that she did not come with me, for I have to tell the lines in her hand—an undertaking which, considering her age and temperament, requires both knowledge

and delicate discrimination. I have an idea, however, that I played the gipsy well, for she unlocks the sideboard and shows me her golden wedding-gifts, and gives me a piece of the cake to dream on.

I am much interested in the sideboard. It is a huge affair of black walnut, and has game birds carved in bold relief. This is an interesting dining-room, and shows a wide divergence of taste truly interpretative of the individualities of the home. The fireplace has been closed in and a hot-air register does duty instead. On the chimney shelf there are wax flowers under glass, a stuffed peacock, and old photographs that are faded and oddly framed.

I love this peacock for its stately pose and burnished feathers. It is a pity farmers do not raise more. Pliny tells of a man he knew, named Lurco, who was honourably renowned and grew quite rich by fattening peacocks and selling them for meat.

There is a grandfather's clock in this dining-room, and it winds with a chain. The walls are hung with pencil drawings, charcoal sketches, and paintings, and there is a sampler which Old Madam worked with her own hands. Time has dimmed its colours, and on first glance the *motif* seems to be a girl fishing, but a closer investigation proves her to be engaged in hauling "the old oaken bucket" out of the well. The woodwork of the room is of black walnut, but, with a colossal and

callous indifference, it has been painted grey. It would appear that fifty years ago paint was more appreciated than polish.

But come over and look at this whatnot! It is quite nine feet high, and is a mine of treasure. Family albums, so old they are held together by rubber bands; Indian bead-work; shell boxes; lexicons, and books on mental philosophy; district-school prizes of long ago, and volumes on the diseases of animals and on "How to be Your Own Lawyer."

The parlour has less individuality than the dining-room, but is much grander. Indeed, it has painted dadoes on the wall, but as the shutters are kept closed in the summer and autumn months to keep out the flies, you cannot see the dadoes very clearly. The shutters are only opened on Sundays or when, on a rare occasion, Old Madam entertains the clergyman or someone who has driven out from the town.

I think I like this way of living. The people know joy rather than pleasure, and joy is the better part.

XXIV

My Birthplace

Oh! to go back to the place where I was born.
—WALT WHITMAN

THE name? Let us call the village "X," as being an unknown quantity, which the reader will vainly attempt to find out since there are full five hundred Ontario villages just like it.

"'Tis no manner av use namin' names," as Mulvaney says, "for it might give the place disrepitation."

I was born and baptised in X, but my mother always declared the baptism did not "take" because, forsooth, the manner of service was Methodist instead of Anglican.

When my father came to X, he attended the Methodist Church because it was the only place of worship in the district, and he continued so to do until his death, before which event he left orders that his remains should be interred in the family plot in the Anglican cemetery. In staying with the church that first supplied the pioneers with service, he showed his right good sense; nevertheless, his line of conduct occasioned grave doubts in my good mother's mind as to the validity

and practical effects of the sprinkling. In order to make amends for this deficiency in my moral fibre, she paid diligent attention to my instruction in the catechism, creeds, and rubrics of the Church. I knew the collects, calendars, and canons long before I could button up the back of my dress. And when I had come to the years of discretion —" And, pray, when was that ? " asks the Padre— I was brought to the bishop that I might myself, with my own mouth, openly before the Church, consent to, ratify, and confirm the vows my godfathers and godmothers undertook for me at my baptism. Although I was profoundly moved by this confirmation service, I was never able to square it with the unpatchable fact that at the prior service I did not have any godfathers or godmothers.

Except on rare occasions, we all six children went to the Methodist Church until we were sent away to school, from which period onward we attended our mother's Church. I think we younglings liked the Methodist manner of service best. It did not call for such strict attention and deportment as the Anglican. We kneeled down in a closed pew with our backs to the preacher, a place and position which afforded unquestioned scope for exercises that could not, in the widest sense of the word, be termed devotional.

Although it was not the custom of X, we were obliged to go to church together and sit together. Also, it was the duty of the brothers to find the

place in the hymn books for their sisters. I have no doubt the rude boys in the gallery and back seats were impressed by this show of chivalry, they being wholly unaware of the numerous sly knocks I got on my ankles, or of the frightening grimaces I had to endure all through the first prayer—a prayer which, as I recall, was always unconscionably long.

The old church has not changed except for a few more weather wrinkles. There is also a new tablet on the wall telling how a soldier, aged twenty-three, was shot under the white flag in South Africa. He was a trooper in the C Squadron of the Strathcona Horse. I had not heard the story of this lad of my native village who fared forth in defence of Empire. The service of Mars seems hard, and his paths lead far from home.

It is good, after the lapse of years, to drift back to the place where you were born. It rinses your soul. Truth to tell, it turns your soul inside out and hangs it on the line.

My first visit is to "Mother" Gibson—she who cared for and humoured me, from the earliest days when I was an oddish atom in baricoats, with hardly more backbone than a jelly-fish, until the latest day, when I left home for good and for bad, with all the best cards in the pack. Yes, I had better explain, for there is such a divergence of opinion among players: the cards were the joker and a long suit in hearts.

Mother Gibson is a well-featured old lady, small

and even dainty. She still calls me "Miss Emily." The Padre looks at her with a slow, enigmatic smile on his face. I have no doubt in the world that he is considering her curiously as a foolish woman who frittered away the opportunity of exorcising my evil spirit by physical suasion.

In those times, when I was a little wilding girl, "the helpers" did not know about the Labourers' Compensation Act, and they did not know it was absurd to live for ever in one family. We are better posted in these days.

And I went to see Dr. B——, for he has practised medicine in X these fifty-three years. Also he has a soul that is well groomed. He has worked and prayed by two thousand birth-beds, my own among the number. His mother, who was my grand-aunt, taught me how to hem a long seam and dance the minuet. She must have been a young-hearted woman, for what I remember most vividly about her was a particularly merry laugh. There is one peculiarity about a laugh: it will not stay buried. If she were alive now, folk would say:

"There is a dame for you! See how she curtseys! You won't see many like her in this day."

Her first husband was an officer in an Irish regiment, and she used to tell me tales of army life. The only one I recall concerned a pig and a drunken orderly—or, if you *will* have it so, a drunken dis-orderly. The story had a moral, but

I have forgotten what it was. Her second husband was an army surgeon, and with him she emigrated to Canada where, for many years, he was Coroner of Toronto. When I knew him in X, where he had retired to be near his son, he was a quiet old gentleman, wore a conical nightcap with a tassel at the apex, read a great deal, and kept an apple toasting on the top of the stove, well back. Substituting a cap of lace and lavender ribbons, I hope the gods may grant me a like old-agedom.

But I was telling you about the junior doctor—the one who has lived here for fifty-three years! He has his mother's gift of humour and story-telling. To him the foibles of the country folk are lovable things, and he never sees the commonplaces of life—this, mayhap, by reason of his Irish blood. There is a drop in the Irish blood that defies analysis. Sometimes I think it is the child-sense, but, on the contrary, it as often appears to be a worldly sense. In this connection, I find myself at a loss for the word. Wisely-mad comes near to it, but it is not exactly correct. Like as not a scientist would phrase it as intuition, that is, if the scientist could be brought to see anything different in Irish blood.

What reminiscences Dr. B—— could write! It is a pity more doctors have not dropped the lance for the pen. Apart from Sir Thomas Browne, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Conan Doyle, Weir Mitchell, and our own Dr. Drummond, I cannot

think of any. There was, of course, Claudius Galen, who wrote five hundred treatises in Greek; but that was nineteen centuries ago, and, besides, he only wrote of medicine.

"He was a quiet old gentleman, wore a conical nightcap . . . and kept an apple toasting on the top of the stove."

Dr. B—— reminds me of the day I brought my brother to his surgery to have a fish-hook taken out of his lip, and how I cried because I was the author of the trouble. I remember this

heart-quake quite well, and also my vast relief and astonishment when the doctor, instead of pulling the hook out backward as my mind of mud had conceived, simply snapped off the forked ends and pulled it out painlessly.

If ever you visit X, remember to drink out of the flowing-well on the road near the doctor's house. It has been there time out of mind. I have read that at St. Andros, an island in the Ægean Sea, Bacchus had a temple with a flowing-well, the waters of which, during the ides of January, tasted like wine. This water at X tastes like wine all the months, except that it is much better than wine; but be sure to lap it out of your palm.

The beaver dam, where we used to fish, is almost dried up. The Padre thinks, from the "lay" of the land, that it was never deep, but this is quite a mistake, for once I fell in and was almost drowned. My eldest brother rescued me, and even to this hour I remember how, in the water, the gamut of my life's little day crushed through my brain.

We used to catch sun-fish, suckers, and chub in the beaver dam. We had earth-worms for bait, but it was necessary to spit on them frequently to secure good results. It was our habit to string the fish on a pronged willow gad to carry them home. I have cudgelled my brain this half-hour, but cannot think of any prouder prize from the world than just these gads of fish.

The old school where we learned the three R's has long since been pulled down. It was a

red, frame building with hand-made desks and benches. The ink-bottles were of stone, and have been known to serve as missiles in a pitched battle with the teacher. This is probably why ink is, nowadays, kept in receptacles or wells sunk in the desks. As all the pupils were kept in one room, we were called forward in separate classes and ranged before the teacher's desk at a toe-line. I was kept in nearly every day for overstepping this line, for "whisp'rin'," or for other sorry conduct. I started to school at the age of seven. So clear is it in my mind, it might only have been last year. I can see my mother, with her dark hair brushed smoothly back and circling her head in a coronet of braids. It was in the spring, for I remember she stood under the lilac bushes and they were in bloom. On this morning she rubbed my palm with hers. She said she was putting a charm in my hand. Was she a humorist or an idealist? Possibly both. Or it may be that my mother had read in history that the hand of Fatima, the daughter of Mohammed, is used by the Arabians as a charm, and is worn as a jewel, or stamped on the door of their houses. Be that as it may, I have always claimed to possess the gift, and have passed it down to two other little girls in similar circumstances.

We used to go to the rector of the parish for lessons in Latin, and I was as far as *sui, sibi, se* before I was sent away to school. But I had visited the city before that. It must have been

about the time I got the charm in my hand, for my photograph, taken on this visit, shows me to have been a very small girl with a serious face and a heavy mop of straight hair. We stayed with my mother's father. We arrived at night, and my step-grandmother received us. She said my grandfather was at his devotions. This was the most markworthy thing I had ever heard in my life. It was incomprehensible to me that anyone should go on praying while visitors were arriving. Indeed, I am not sure to this day that my grandfather would not have shown more practical piety in postponing his prayers and welcoming his daughter in person.

He lived in a low, broad house in a big garden with long, flower-bordered walks, arbours, and trees. It was bounded on three sides by a high, wooden fence. On the fourth side there was a stone wall, against which he grew peaches. I do not think he could have been successful in their culture, for the fruit was profusely specked with a black blight. There were many strange trees and shrubs in this garden, for my grandfather's hobby appears to have been arboriculture.

In one corner of the garden he kept a stuffed goat in a glass cage. They told me it was the "lodge goat." What a goat that was! A real child of sin! Never can I forget the arrogance of its four-inch tail, its malignly twisted horns, its flat, ironical nose, and close-set agate eyes.

My mother told me she had to run around this

garden three times every night before going to bed. Her bed hour, till she left home a bride, was nine o'clock. She was not allowed to read about politics or business in the papers. It was not fitting literature for a young lady; besides, she had not time, for the mode required one's hair to be done in myriads of little braids.

At grandfather's, we used to breakfast in a large room made entirely of glass, over which grape-vines clambered, and upon which the rain made a heavenly dance.

Outside the walls, my grandfather had a number of small houses which were inhabited by tenants. I did not know what tenants were, but associated them in my mind with Fenians and other profligate folk, for grandfather's cook threatened to tell on me if ever again I played with the tenants' children. This was probably my first lesson in snobbery.

XXV

A Broken Nest

There was once a child who strolled about a good deal and thought of a number of things.

—CHARLES DICKENS.

THE old house where we lived has long since been destroyed by fire. I would have it no other way. There is a hurt in worn-out and broken nests. Attend you! I was not born in this house. My uncle bought me in Barrie, thinking I was a doll. Fortunately, my mother had clothes in the house that had been worn by my brothers when they were babies.

It was an old-fashioned house of the style known as Colonial. The front door was panelled, and around it were little panes of glass. The dining-room was our living-room. It had windows set in deep casements, and always they were hung with green rep curtains drawn back by heavy, woollen cords that had tassels at the ends. They were not suspended from poles and rings, but fastened in some inexplicable way behind a heavy cornice of gilt. It was a happy combination, and perhaps Dame Fashion will one day wave it back. The walls were wainscoted with some dark wood

and, if we except the table, the biggest piece of furniture was a settle with high, curved ends and capable of seating all six of us at once. In keeping with the period, and the uses to which it was put, it was appropriately covered with horse-hair. It was prime fun, I can tell you, to take a header off the end of it and turn somersaults on the springs. Did it break the springs? No! They must have been broken always.

The sideboard was almost as long as the settle, and had cupboards with doors at either end. The sprigged china was kept in one cupboard, and the glasses and fruit cake in the other. I can remember clearly the niceties of the decanters, and how it was possible to gauge the guests by the decanter which was produced. Men on business were given malt whisky, either in its purity or, if the weather were cold, in the form of hot punch. Although he seldom drank with anyone, my father treated his especial friends to cherry punch or punch with lemon in it. Neither was it unusual to give this drink to ladies who had driven in from one of the neighbouring villages to spend the day with my mother. In this case, it was called "cherry-cordial," and was held to be a most excellent preventive against catching one's death of cold. The wine decanter was only produced when my mother had guests to dinner or a party for cards. We youngsters used to eat the cherries, lemon, and sugar out of the bottom of the tumblers, and so, according to all known precedent, should have

turned out black sheep who, like the reformed temperance lecturers, "learned to love liquor at our father's table." But, strange to relate, none of us did, unless the black silk gowns which my brothers wear in pursuit of their calling can be so construed. The fourth brother went into the medical profession. My sister and I? Ah well, the Lord in His seventh heaven made us women.

Off the dining-room was the little bedroom. It was not little, and it was not a bedroom, but possibly it was intended for one. In this we stored our coats, umbrellas, cricket-bats, fishing-rods, lacrosse-sticks, and things that seemed to have no particular place in the house. It also contained a big, wooden chest full of old-fashioned finery—a dolman of watered silk, heavy with jet, a pelerene of velvet and lace, a blue silk dress with pendent bugles, veils and fans, and other accessories well calculated to excite the imagination of a little girl who "made pretend" she was grown up. "Genteel" is the only word that could express my attitudes, and oh! but I was proud as proud.

I never cared, though, for this room, because here it was my father birched proper principles into the family. It was true he only whipped the brothers, but I used to stand outside the door and cry too. It is entirely thinkable that, in spite of their tremendous outcries and loud promises of amendment, I was on more than one of these occasions the greatest sufferer. They were

frauds, those brothers. My father never punished my sister or me, though he often threatened us, but always with a twinkle in his eye. And here, after the flight and blight of the years, as I stand on the old place and muse on my father, this kindly, whimsical twinkle of his is more concrete to me, and more individual, than even the memory of his face or figure. He was a man of strong positive qualities. God's hand did not tremble when He made this father of mine. And He gave my father eyes of positive blue, and hair of positive black, and cast his features in a mould that was positively Roman. While his most marked traits were business acumen, humour, and love of family, he seemed to be an all-capable man. It might truly be said of him what John Aubrey said of Thomas Fuller, he had "a very working head." Except in this matter of punishment, he reared his girls in the same manner as his boys. I had to garden, cast accounts, carve, ride, and play cricket. While still in the pinafore cocoon, I could hitch and drive a team, and, alack-a-day! let them run away. It was generally conceded by the village folk—and I have no doubt with some show of reason—that a special providence stood ward for "them young Ferguson divils."

We had a vastly heavy carriage, which was familiarly known hereabout as "the chariot." It was as unique in its durability and power of resisting shocks as the wonderful "one-horse shay." My father presented it to my mother when she

was a bride, and I have always understood that it was the first carriage to come to our county. It was our prime pleasure to race every team on the road, which pleasure accounted for more than one of our runaways, and for not a few of the little-room episodes. In those days, we considered it highly undesirable—indeed, the mark of a poor, paltry person—to "take dust" from anyone's wheels, and we seldom did.

But I was telling you about the house. The parlour was a long room with a square piano, plenty of pictures and books, and heavy, low furniture. The card-table therein was the cause of grave scandal in our neighbourhood, for it was a Methodist circuit and only a few Anglicans played whist. Although this was the sole card-table in our part, numerous were the sermons preached concerning the perniciousness of the game. This was a sore point with my little mother, but, so far as I am aware, in nowise interfered with her practice of the cross-ruff and finesse.

In the parlour there was also a large, plate-glass mirror which rested on a marble stand near the floor. I used to pose before this, and pretend I was Rachel, the great actress. I do not know why I selected Rachel for my ideal, but possibly because I knew of no other. My last pose before it was on the eve of my wedding. On this occasion I placed a lamp on the stand that I might the better see the draping of my bridal dress. The heat of the lamp cracked the mirror

in quite fifty directions. My mother had it covered with curtains that the guests might not see, but the guests saw, and more than one woman looked at me with curious, half-frightened eyes. From that day till this nothing unfortunate has happened to me which has not been assigned to the breaking of that wretched mirror.

Long before any of us could stretch an octave we were taking music lessons. We all hated it, and none of us had the least talent. In the evenings I used to play and sing to my father. The dear soul persuaded me that to listen was his pleasure. My favourite selections were "Wild roved an Indian girl" and "The Gipsy's Warning." The latter song was full of situations and ended with the startling *dénouement:*

"Lady, in that green grave yonder
Lies the gipsy's only child."

I can remember, as though it were yesterday, the thrills and raptures that passed through my small person as I swelled out on those lines like an avenging fury.

"I used to pose before this, and pretend I was Rachel, the great actress."

I was also thoroughly versant with Moore's melodies. To the setting of "The Harp that once through Tara's Halls" I sang "Molly Asthore." It was composed by the Honourable George Ogle, who, I was credibly informed, acted as my grandfather's godfather. He loomed up in my mind's eye, this godfather, as a unique and very important person who had been crossed in love by an inconceivably foolish and heartless girl. Molly must have been a flirtish minx, else why did this godfather sing:

"You said you lov'd me, Molly dear. Ah! why did I believe?
Or who could think such tender words were meant but to deceive?
Your love was all I asked on earth, kind heaven could grant no more;
Agrammachree *my* colleen oge, *my Molly Asthore."*

Also, I used to recite "pieces." Most of them were of an heroic nature, to say nothing of being tempestuous. My star performance was "Bernardo del Carpio." Standing on a table, and in my best Rachel manner, which included a sweeping bow with my feet in the third position for dancing, I once recited this for Sir John A. Macdonald, Sir Charles Tupper, and Mr. Dalton McCarthy, who were holding a political meeting in X, and were the guests of my mother and father. I thought a vast deal of my abilities in those days, when all the critics were kindly.

I had often heard of Sir John and, in particular,

of a bon mot he made at my mother's wedding. Among the other wedding guests was Mr. George L. Allan, the Governor of the Toronto jail. A number of girls pushed and held Mr. Allan under a tiny hole in the marquee roof through which the rain was falling. Attracted by the hearty laugh of the misses, Sir John approached and watched, with serious face, the rain as it danced on the Governor's bald head.

"Well, Allan," remarked Sir John, "they have you where you have had many another good fellow."

"Where's that?" asked the Governor.

With a grin, and a wink that conveyed infinite understanding, Sir John replied:

"Under the drop."

Most folk who write their reminiscences can straightway tell you what books influenced them as children. I regret I am unable so to do. It would be a distinct satisfaction, and rather respectable, to trace such and such a personal characteristic to "The Pilgrim's Progress," "The Arabian Nights," or to Plutarch's "Lives," but no books stand out before me in particular, unless it was a secret and select course in Beadle's Dime Novels. Girls who have brothers are apt to have more catholicity in their literary tastes than others not so fortunately dowered. On the whole, my greatest delight was in my mother's scrapbook. It contained wonderful steel engravings and poetry, also events concerning her family which had been

clipped from the newspapers. We had several old books which had been owned by my great-grandfather, and I always regretted that they contained no underscorings or *marginalia* which might have given me clues to his personality. I can remember, even now, my pleasure in the feel of the rough hand-made paper and in the smell of the leathern binding.

Our special book-room was in the hay-mow. It is always associated in my memory with the smell of dried timothy, the brush of tree-limbs against the sides, and the sound of rain on the roof. This was probably because we only read when the rain drove us to cover. We had a rain-proof room in the wood-pile as well, but this was more commonly used by my brothers as a safe retiring place wherein to smoke elm-root.

I used to keep dolls in this wood-pile warren. My favourite was Rosalind. In spite of her name, she was only a low-born china doll, whose deficiences left much to the imagination. I was wont to confide my secrets to her just as, nowadays, I do to my horse. Rosalind was my over-soul. Later, I had another doll—a wax one—called "Mrs. Well-I-declare," after the lady who gave her to me.

The wood-pile was a most excellent place to *cache* the apples we stole from Jacky Stewart's orchard. We had apples at home, but who wants to pull their own apples, especially when pulling your neighbours' calls forth the practice of subter-

fuges and deep arts. It was taking our lives in our hands when we went after Jacky's fruit. It is true he had a wooden leg, but, to balance this handicap, he had an enormous stride and carried a cane. Ah, well! apples seldom fall into one's lap. Nearly always one must climb fences for them and run for dear life. It is wondrous strange that so fresh and wholesome a thing as an apple should for ever be guarded by fences, dogs, bear-traps, and old gentlemen. In the flavour of the banana and the musk-melon there is just a hint of wickedness, but the tang of the apple is pre-eminently virtuous. Yet even God himself placed all humanity in one side of His scale and against us He weighed an apple. At least, I have heard tell that He did.

When not at games, or in mischief, we had work to do in the house or garden, which work was usually executed in "bees." Our special trials were polishing the knives and cleaning the lamps. Bath-brick was the clean-all of the day, and to secure desirable results the knives had to be rubbed on a board till they shone like morning sunlight. Still, one could scamp the knives upon occasion without serious risk of detection, but the lamp-glasses imperiously required cleaning. How I loathed those diurnal polishings and wick-trimmings! At our house it was in the lamp-glass the serpent lurked instead of in the wine-glass.

In the holidays, before we were sent back to

the city, we always drove to the third concession line and pulled a sack of green butternuts, which were placed in the attic to dry and brown against our home-coming in December. The thoughts of these, and of a barrel of brown sugar ready for immediate conversion into taffy, sustained me through the long, barren wastes of the Michaelmas and Christmas terms. They were wondrous times, those flitter-winged holidays. Fruit and nuts at night were not leaden; tomatoes did not produce cancer, and sweets were not bad for the teeth. For the Easter holidays, my father, who was held locally to be a "good provider," laid in five gallons of maple molasses. Generally, we went with him to get it from a certain farmer whose name is of no consequence whatever, although it was George Duff. Such syrup as this Duff man made! seductive, amber stuff, the like of which I have never since tasted.

But one cannot stand for ever musing on the old home. The strange woman who lives in the new house has already looked from her window three times. She doubtless wonders that I stay so long. She does not know that, years and years ago, I planted this tree under which I sit. Understand me, I beg; I held it while my father shovelled in the clay and tied the tree to a stake.

Yes, I must move on and visit the little cemetery before I leave for my home in the distant Northland. One day, I shall be brought here to sleep with my kinspeople in the ground that nurtured

me. Then, be it ordained that the village boys who saw me go out to the world may carry me up to the cleft in the hillside where, as children, we played together. It were a suitable rounding to "this impertinence" called life.

On my way thither, I meet the Padre, and we first go to the church. The doors are locked, for the rector and his family are off holidaying. We are eager to get in, for we were wed in this church, and it has other fair memories. We find one window in the basement unbolted—a right sweet discovery this. But, alas! the door leading from the basement into the church is closed, so we must stay below stairs. In my time there was no basement here. This space was reserved for bodies that were specially honoured by being buried under the chancel. Their lank, unquiet ghosts used to haunt the church and graveyard. There is no question of this, for the Show Fair grounds where our cow pastured adjoined the graveyard, and these wayward spirits used to plait her tail. All we youngsters knew this to be an unequivocal mark of bedevilment. And it was the sight of an evil ghoul from this chancel charnel-house that frightened Sandy Bishop's horse so that Sandy was thrown heavily and broke his neck. This happened nearly opposite the graveyard gate. Mother Gibson called them spunkies, kelpies, and flibbertigibbets. Nothing could make her speak of the devil. He was "the enemy."

Sitting in the basement, which the Padre calls

" the crypt," we talk over these things and about our marriage. When the Padre gets sentimental about his wedding anniversary, or anything like that, he expresses the sentiment by making light of it; and this occasion was no exception to the rule. It is the special form of rudeness which a man gives only to the woman he loves best. He is so sure of himself. This is why I sometimes threaten I will run away with someone else, but he only laughs mightily. He knows right well, the rapscallion, that no one will want to run away with me and, if one did, I would not have the courage to run. It is not well, though, to expect too much of a husband. If he be able-bodied and capable of inspiring respect in the eyes of a rebellious cook, that is all a reasonable woman should look for.

The Padre says that he thinks the marriage service should be amended to say will you " make " each other for better or worse, instead of " take " each other, in which case he would have the authority of the Church in setting to rights certain admirable traits of mine which he is pleased to consider and designate as " glaring idiosyncrasies." He also thinks it a mistake to make a man vow " to have and *to hold.*" It is not always possible to hold, for women, he declares, have qualities like sand which enable them to slip through a man's fingers, however tightly he shuts them. And we talked about happy marriages ; but I would not be drawn out, for the Padre does not know how I

do it. I will tell you though, if you come closer, for he is listening. Here it is: Forget always and absolutely that you are married—forget it, and laugh much; *especially you must laugh.*

I dread going out to the cemetery, and yet I long to go. It was to visit this place that I have come across the continent; but I never told anyone. And now that I am here I dally indoors and laugh. Presently, I will go out; but I would rather be alone then.

They were not always pleasant and lovely in their lives, these kinspeople of mine, for they often quarrelled, as Irish families are wont to; but in their deaths they are not divided. In whatever part of the world they die, they are brought back here to sleep. In the deeding of the property to the church, my people reserved a family plot, but, from time to time, they have had to buy new plots as grandparent and grandchild were gathered in. Their histories might fill a book, but it would be a book of tragedy—a story of young men cut off in their heyday of success, of perplexed meanings, and frustrated ambitions. I could not write the story, for no one can properly appraise their own people.

There are two small graves out there, and the sight of them will sting my dull ache into torture. This is one reason why I dally in the basement and am gay. Gaiety and grief are the extremes that meet. The small girl who occupies one of these graves had asked me to sing to her of "the little

Lord Jesus asleep on the hay," and while I sang she, too, fell asleep. She did not hear the last lines, unless the angels sang them to her when she woke again. Or, mayhap, old Luther, who wrote the hymn, finished it himself for her. I often wonder about it. And once she worked a little motto with thread on cardboard. It contained all the ethics she had been taught—" Be Good." Afterwards, I found this pitiful thing among her toys and had it framed. It hangs where I can see it every day. It is the summary of my creed. I know other and longer ones, but they may all be reduced to these words. After all, creeds do not differ; it is only the people. It is a pity—even a mistake—that Christianity does not permit our burning cedar-wood, honey cakes, and a measure of barley, for a sweet savour to our dead. It seems heartless just to look and turn away—perhaps, for ever.

XXVI

Solitaire

And who will walk a mile with me,
Along life's weary way?
—HENRY VAN DYKE.

What though the storms the summer gardens rifle,
O Margherita!
Still on the bough is left a leaf of gold.
—SONG FROM *Faust.*

HERE I lie, with nothing left to me but a tube in my side and a sense of the absurd. I was not so sure about the sense, but my nurse, who was trained in the South, says: "Where evah did yo' get the ideah?"—this because I apologise for carrying a bottle about with me all the time. "Not from you," I reply, in an equally hateful manner. The bottle, she says, is tied to the tube as a necessary precaution for a "case" who wants to dance in bed. But it isn't so—it isn't so at all. My muscular movements are mere futile attempts to relieve the stagnation and nerve-grinding pain in my back. It is a horrible, red pain that snarls and rankles like a vixen in a steel trap, and I think it even shows sharp teeth, but of this I cannot be sure, for it is difficult to see your own back even when you are well and can twist about

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enough knowledge of medicine to tell the name of the malady; but it has something to do with a stone that gets stuck in a pipe—or perhaps it is a duct. How the stone got there is a matter for speculation. In the nature of things it could hardly be a glacial deposit, so we might infer a piece of heart broke off and became lodged. The Padre says hearts are often made of stone, and he knows, for he has passed quite a dozen examinations on these things, and he knows about a death called "eternal" and black, bitter spirits that are glad when you sin even a little.

I have learned the name of the malady now. Three times one of the interns spelt it for me—"cholecystitis." To have died of so wonderful a thing would have been most distinguished. Until this American surgeon was found, there was no angel to roll away the stone. He may resent this inference, for folk say he is afraid of praise, but this use of the word "angel" is purely figurative. In reality he is intensely human, or how else come his thumbs to twitch when he stands in a consulting-room listening to a doctor reading the history of a case? I distinctly saw them twitch. I have small intent to call the Rochester men the greatest surgeons of the world, for everyone has heard this moth-eaten opinion over and over. Indeed, who wants to praise surgeons and nurses when one's mood makes for nothing but reprobation and sour innuendo?

I did not want to come here, anyway, but the

" the crypt," we talk over these things and about our marriage. When the Padre gets sentimental about his wedding anniversary, or anything like that, he expresses the sentiment by making light of it; and this occasion was no exception to the rule. It is the special form of rudeness which a man gives only to the woman he loves best. He is so sure of himself. This is why I sometimes threaten I will run away with someone else, but he only laughs mightily. He knows right well, the rapscallion, that no one will want to run away with me and, if one did, I would not have the courage to run. It is not well, though, to expect too much of a husband. If he be able-bodied and capable of inspiring respect in the eyes of a rebellious cook, that is all a reasonable woman should look for.

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cates so much that is strong that I am glad beyond measure he has entered the lists against disease and death.

Ah, me! I'll play a game of solitaire and forget my mischances. It requires a large pillow for the fall of the cards, and it is difficult to get close enough, but if you let one foot hang out of bed, the pose is easier and relieves the strain on your back. The charms of solitaire lie in the fact that you may talk all the time without culpability, and that you play a lone hand. Last winter, when our train was stuck in a snow-bank, I played for hours. A nervous old gentleman across the aisle said testily, "Madam, you are playing against the devil. Stop it!" but I was beating the devil, and kept on. There is just one thing to remember about solitaire. *Count your cards at first.* I played three games this evening with only forty-nine cards. This is how the Styx came to win out against the Saskatchewan. The pity of it, Janey; the pity of it!

* * * * *

At last everyone has gone to bed, but I have turned on my light just to figure this thing out. It is foolish to fly a signal of distress and get into a funk. It is better to agree with my adversary quickly. Death may be an old ghoul, but he is a humorous one. I should not be surprised if he were even good-looking. In the nether-world he is the "man about town," a Mephistophelian fellow, something of a roysterer, with a penchant

for the society of ladies. I have the whole night to write a poem on him, but I will hide it, for they made me cross my heart not to work for a year. If I do, I have my choice of the sequels—paralysis, insanity, or brain-fever. Ah! um! as if writing were work!

Oh, I am the ghoul of the glutton eyes,
I eat the fools, and I eat the wise;
I gobble their bodies and gulp their breath,
For I, you ken, am Old Man Death.
I've a grasp on babes and a grip on sires,
A clutch of steel that never tires;
Oh, I sing them to rest in my wooden nest,
It's long and narrow, with breadth for chest.

But, Gods and men! she makes a racket,
This Light o' Love in my straight-front jacket;
She can cry, and pray, and sweat, and swear,
For I hold her fast in my close-sprung snare.
She has grafted men and garnered gold
Of the saint, the sinner, the young, and the old;
She has eaten their brains and supped their breath—
But I'll eat her, for I'm Grafter Death.

I've an eye for beauty, and a tooth for sweets;
I'm a very old Jew for savoury meats;
With essence of sobs and salt of sighs,
I gorge myself on flavorous pies.
It's a tasty morsel this upper crust,
I eat it first as an eater must;
There are hearts of women that loved and sung,
And, right at the bottom, a man's red tongue.

I gnaw on white folk and chew on yellow,
I relish the black- and the red-skinned fellow;
The king and his page, and the dancing girl,
The knave, the nun, and the belted earl.

I'm the Lord of Ghouls and King of Grafters;
I laugh and shout, and shake the rafters;
Of all the fighters in earth's dust ring
Of rounders and bounders, I'm chief and King.

I'll eat up the stars, and I'll eat up the moon;
I'll sup up the sun with a basting spoon;
And one of these times when I'm hungry grown,
I'll eat up the devil himself on his throne.
For they all fall to me, be they god or gnome,
As the rainbow falls to the ocean's foam;
And the more I eat, the more I crave,
Of all things thought of, I'm the end and grave.

Then here's to myself, I'm the King of Grafters,
I laugh and shout and shake the rafters;
And one of these days when you're laughing too,
I'll come your way and feast on you!

* * * * *

They wanted to carry me to the operating-room, but I insisted on walking. That story of the man who took up his bed and walked is not so wonderful after all. I could have done it quite easily had I been so minded.

I stopped in the hall and threw kisses into the air—kisses that were not in the least careless. It would never do to tell the nuns they were thrown to a man, so I let them believe me demented. The Padre promised last night he would be within call, but quite out of sight, for had he once said "Old girl" the operation would have been off. I have seen hurt timber-wolves get away before now, and I know just how it is done. You whirl twice very quickly, and make a sharp break for cover.

Solitaire

In the anæsthetic room, the doctors and nurses were swathed in white—even their mouths were covered. It was shameful and indecorous to laugh so loudly but, perhaps, after all, I was demented. I told them it was a whistle past the graveyard, but I laughed because they looked like the stupid mountain ghouls in "Rip Van Winkle," while I felt like Rip. I think most people laugh in the face of the knife; but why, I do not know. When they had tied my arms and feet with ropes of white cloth and had laid me on a table, the scene shifted. I was Constance de Beverley in the dungeon, and, from some dim place in the back of my mind, her words flooded in on me like a torrent:

> *"Now, men of death, work forth your will*
> *For I can suffer and be still;*
> *And come he slow, or come he fast,*
> *It is but Death who comes at last."*

There is a physical and mental comfort to be had from the cone. The subtle search of ether through the veins gives surcease from excitement and pain; it seems a euthanasy or an atrophy that is nearly dissolution itself. The imagination plays fancifully with blissful pictures till, insentient and painless, all that is mortal of you welters out to haggard seas. It is the hour and power of darkness.

* * * * *

I am an alien in struggle with an alien fog. No; this is assuming too much. I am not I.

Open Trails

I'm the Lord of Grafters and King of Grafters;
I romp and shout and shake the rafters;
All the lights on earth's dust ring
To the cheers and hosannas I'm chief and King

I'll eat up the stars and I'll eat up the moon
I'll sup on the sun with a basting spoon;
And late of these days when I'm hungry grown,
I'll eat up the devil himself on his throne.
For long all told as we be, be they god or gnome,
As the rain-drop falls to the ocean's foam;
And the more I eat, the more I crave,
For all things sleep in me, I'm the end and grave.

Then here's to myself, I'm the King of Grafters,
I romp and shout and shake the rafters;
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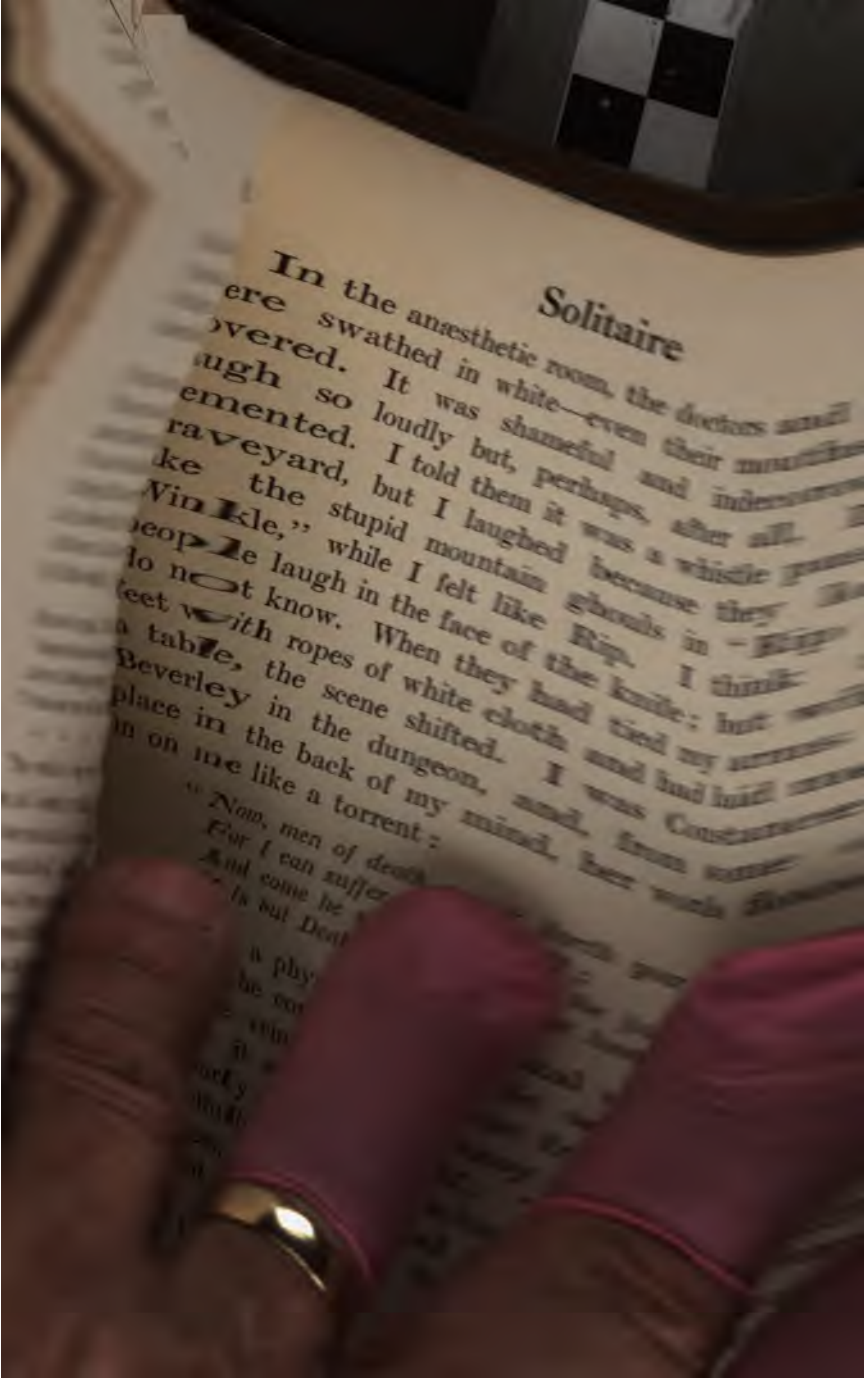

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"Now, men of death
For I can suffer
And come he
Is but Death

Almost I was, but there is only drifting, and drifting. I am a tortured and maimed god hanging from a wooden cross on a white wall that fronts me. I drift into the fog and drift, for always the goal eludes me. My body is nailed so that I may not move. Oh, the cruel, cruel stab in my side! And the sweat, and the blackness, and the thirst!

"Take me down!" I cry out. "Take me down!"

It is all over, and I know now that I am not crucified, for someone kisses my hand and whispers: "Old girl! dear old girl!" It must surely be an angel.

* * * * *

It was foolish to choke up and go dumb when I got back to the Saskatchewan, my thoughts quick with joy. The big Irish firemen who carried me in from the ambulance were no nidnoddy fellows, I can tell you. They talked as if they owned me, and I like to think they do.

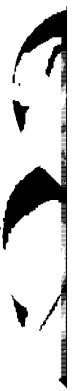
"And *you,* lean as a spring pick'rel. Well, well! Troth, an' we missed you! You'll be afther racin' us agin one of these foine days, and throwin' the dust in our eyes."

"It's Major and Magic we've hitched on the day. Sure, an' we had to put slippers on thim, for 'twas poundin' their hoofs off, they were, wid their high-steppin' hackney thricks."

"Begorra, it's like the siven years of famine y'luk! You'd better be afther eatin' heartylike.

An' sure, a dhrop 'ud not hurt you naither, and 'ud give a bit of colour to your cheeks. Sure, liquor's the life of thim temperance societies, to say nothing of the Irish."

Yes; it was foolish to choke up and go dumb, with all that was in me singing to the savour of life. Heaven may be well enough in its way, but I have opinions of my own that I will never, never tell.



ENVOI

Our country, where the North Star shines, has more trails than any man may tread. Long and devious are they, and only the great gods know what men may find therein. Some are laid with iron, some are beaten out by heelless shoes, and many by cloven hoofs, or fur-padded claws. Some trails are in the trees, and he who runs may read their letters blazed in white, for here, in the North, the axe is our pen. And, even so, the plough is a pen that makes long open staffs whereon a million notes of gold will sing the sibilant song of the wheat. But there are other trails that beat across the North—trails, trails, trails—and I pray the genius of the land to let me find my own. As I tell him all about it, and whisper it, he smiles sadly, and says:

Envoi

"It cannot be—not ever—for we are talking of open trails, and this of yours was closed long, long ago when Adam and his mate-woman were set adrift from Eden."

I pretend not to hear, for he has called me by name, and on this trail I shall have a new name which I will never tell to people. I trow I will never tell.

"But it is such a little trail," I urge; "and hidden."

And I tell him about the small, small house in the woods, and the black and white cow, and of my churn that will go round and round and make little rolls of butter like to August corn in the ear. I tell him of my four white hens that will plump out their feathers and scold at me, and of a pontifically mannered cockerel, like to flame colour.

Oh, yes! and an arrow's flight away from the trail there will be a stream where I may fish for hours, and bathe on warm days. (I nearly forgot to tell him this.) There will be no wires, or post office, or any church on this trail, but the Padre will say to me every day, "The Lord be with you," whereupon I shall bow to him and make reply, "And with thy spirit." We shall have books a-plenty, and a fireplace. My pans will hang on the ends of the book-cases, so that when I cook cakes or mix other things that are good for us to eat, the Padre may read to me. I will halt him, and say:

"Ho! ho! not so fast, sir! Just see what the brown book on the top shelf says about that."

How we will argue and laugh! Oh! we'll be great laughers, I can tell you. And of night the wind will make plaint in the trees and cry, so that we may be glad for the shelter and for the feel of the heat from the fire.

I tell this man other things, but he is a stupid genius and stubborn, for he goes on mumbling about Eden and closed trails and flaming swords, till I hold my hands over my ears for very vexation.

But, look you! I shall one day find it, for so it is written; and may it happen, my gentle friend, that you may find one too.

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